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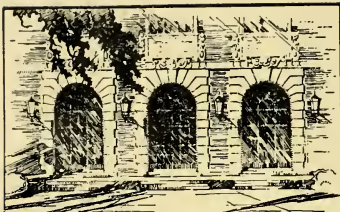
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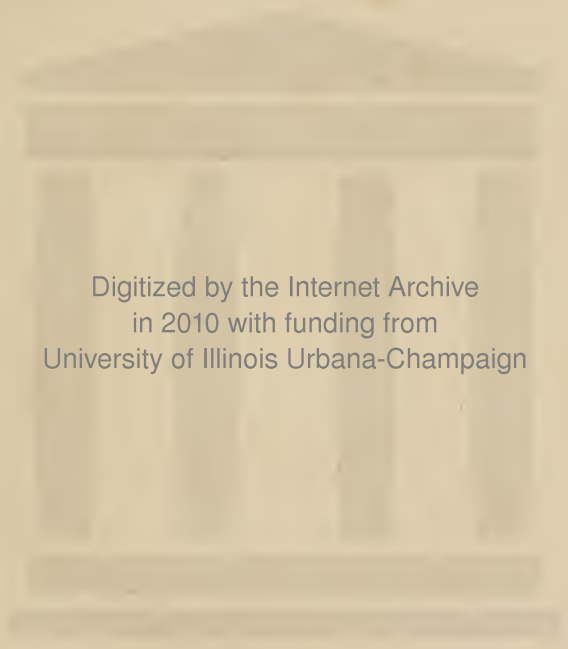


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The Prelate & the King

London: Hurst & Blackett.

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334
MARTIN F. TUPPER

D. C. L., F. R. S.

Author of "Proverbial Philosophy" &c.



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CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

The relic 1

CHAPTER II.

Old Paris and the confessor of St. Etienne's . . . 8

CHAPTER III.

A court-day at the Louvre 21

CHAPTER IV.

The cunning of Philip Augustus 29

CHAPTER V.

Angélique, and news of a brother 34

CHAPTER VI.

Hal's Embassies 40

CHAPTER VII.

Angélique's Adventure by the way	48
--	----

CHAPTER VIII.

The Murderer and his Victim	70
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

The Churl arraigns the King	78
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER X.

An acolyte and his sister	87
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XI.

Religion and its persecutors	93
--	----

CHAPTER XII.

An orthodox sister and an orthodox sermon	100
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

The Auto-da-fé	106
--------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

About Angélique's and Simon's antecedents	120
---	-----

CHAPTER XV.

Escape; disguise: Hal's martyrs	135
---	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

How to deal with a dilemma, and how to please a Pope .	141
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

Reygate cavern	150
--------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

A miracle; and its exposition	160
---	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

A new Primate	169
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XX.

John's finger-rings; and the interdict	176
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

A brotherly meeting: and Angélique's position	183
---	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

The scourge: and Simon at Winchester	191
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

Simon and Angélique pay certain visits	197
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

Excommunication and Deposition	209
--	-----

CHAPTER XXV.

Armorica	218
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVI.

A Call at the Alhambra	227
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Shipwreck , . . .	234
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Pandulph and his Homager	241
------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIX.

An Interview long looked for	250
--	-----

CHAPTER XXX.

A Gallop to Runne-mead	262
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXI.

Magna Charta	268
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXII.

Lewis the Dauphin	279
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXIII.

John's end	284
----------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXIV.

All achieved	293
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXV.

A good man's death	299
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXVI.

And Burial	304
----------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Repeated	309
--------------------	-----

STEPHAN LANGTON.



CHAPTER I.

The Relic.

A VERITABLE fragment of the True Cross !

Stephan saw at once the immense advantage of possessing such a treasure: it was nothing more than a simple fact that he held in his hand the means of propitiating kings and popes: the earnest errand of his life for England might wondrously be speeded by that magic sacket.

But its authenticity was everything ; and must be set out clearly at all risks ; even though on the threshold a difficulty lay in the way of

securing this, which nothing but a perilous frankness could overcome. And Stephan acted with that frank wisdom.

He forthwith sought out and secured a notary ; and requesting (through Hal) the presence of the worshipful chief-magistrate of Rouen in the Abbot's audience-room, Stephan went straight before his Superior with the palmer and his relic.

First, he explained openly his own true name and story : then that of his father, so strangely after six lustres restored as from the dead : and, by the time the notary and mayor had come, all was clear and ready in the Abbot's mind for attestation.

Then, before those two legal officers and their attendant witnesses, the palmer told his tale ; his own antecedents being vouched for by Hal, his ancient neighbour, and Stephan,—then better known as Le Frère Antoine, his excellent son. The cross-examination was sharp, and its result

satisfactory : everything asserted found its proofs : and thus the document of authenticity was drawn up in due form : whereof Stephan demanded (and no doubt duly paid for) seven attested counterparts, which those gowned witnessing clerks copied on the spot at the Abbot's table.

Then, in the presence of all producing the holy morsel, Stephan with a miserere dagger divided its crumbling antiquity into seven equal portions. One, for his father, who reverently received it : one, for the Austin College of Rouen,—to the Abbot's infinite gratitude and wonder : and the remaining five, each sealed in its attesting document with all due legal forms, did the prudent patriot reserve for good uses whereof we may be told hereafter. And so the needful ceremony came to an end.

A great consequence remained : Rouen, English Rouen, King John's frequent haunt, was no longer an asylum for a monk, however famous

or learned, whose name judicially avowed was Stephan Langton. He must find some other home;—as the Abbot kindly but firmly told him at once and in no small fear and trembling; for John's vindictiveness was dreaded, in especial by the monks and friars.

Stephan at night thought it all out on his pallet: and this was the result. The faithful Hal should first escort his poor old father home again: aided on his difficult way, as the experienced rough Mercury well knew how, by Robin's emissaries passim, and an occasional friendly litter or saddle-back when obtainable for the poor crippled squire of Wodetone. With this embassy Stephan sent one of his five precious pacquets,—and perhaps a still more precious letter full of earnest love,—to Alice: whereof anon.

For his own safety, a notable opening offered; which another of his magical pacquets might avail to expand still further. Philip the Second

of France, better known by the complimentary alias of Philip Augustus, having espoused the cause of Arthur the undoubted heir-legitimate of England, was just now in open antagonism against King John. No man could be more welcome to his most Christian Highness than an English foe of the usurper ; and if to boot that foe were a celebrated author scholar and divine, all the better ; and best of all, if he happened to be one able and willing to bestow on some chief religious house, (or on the King himself if he wished it,) so rare if not unique a relic as a real bit of the True Cross.

After the battle of Tiberias, the Saracens had burnt the whole of the remainder captured in battle and half-buried under the slain : old Hugh Langton's morsel was probably the only genuine bit in existence : he himself believed that it had miraculously saved him ; for, lying half dead among that heap of bodies, flung aside by those Paynim who had seized the Holy

Rood, he had strangely found succour for life on the spot where he lay like Hagar's Ishmael ; for the mangled body of some provident esquire lying close beside him in the heap kindly wore a wallet, and in it was a flask of wine and some bread. Hugh transferred the precious relic he had bitten from his mouth to his pouch, ate and drank as one of John's own starved hostages should have done ; and, by such timely food well strengthened, after awhile crept away from those festering bodies, and got help of some literal good Samaritans ; and having undergone years of hardship and encountered a world of adventures is—where now we find him. The relic, *valeat quantum*, was undoubtedly genuine and authentic.

Here then was a bribe for a king, if need be : a bribe to help Liberty and England ; for Stephan Langton never was selfish. It was clear what he ought to do, and whither to go. Armed with the “testamur” of the Abbot of Rouen

and his council, the famous Prælector should straightway make all speed for Paris.

These were his pallet thoughts, and he acted on them, as his wont was, instantly.

CHAPTER II.

Old Paris, and the Confessor of St. Etienne's.

THE speediest, easiest and safest way for Stephan to get from Rouen to Paris was by water. In spite of the swift Seine contrary throughout, and all the perils from its rude bankdwellers, that silent highway was infinitely more practicable than the land tracks through forests and marshes infested by bestial as well as human wolves. I cannot stop to chronicle our fugitive monk's adventures for that long travel of danger: how well for a disguise his old forester-livery of Sir Guy de Marez bested

him ; how prudently the monastic habit with some books and parchments and especially certain manuscript works of his own (afterwards world-famous) made up the forester's bundle ; and how gradually he won his way to Paris in the craft of a sturdy fisherman ; surely these dreary details need only such a touch or two as thus to set the facts clearly before you. Suffice it that on the sixth day, having set out on a rainy moonless night and so escaped the river guard, he duly got on shore near the chained logs floating at the water gate, handy to King Philip's new round-tower at the Louvre.

Mediæval Paris at the opening of the thirteenth century was less than a twelfth part of its present greatness. The Isle de la Cité, with a straggling cantle to the north as far as St. Lazare beyond the present Boulevard Montmartre called La Ville, and another like triangle to the south styled L'Université including the Panthéon,

these (from what we now call the Pont des Arts to the Quai des Ormes) encircled by a turreted and gated wall, and bridged clumsily to and from the island by the Great and Little Châtelet, will give us a sufficient idea of Old Paris for our present purpose. Its chief features were the great Roman Palais des Thermes with its aqueducts from Chaillot and Arcueil, Hugh Capet's Palais de Justice, the Louvre even then begun to be unfinished, and Notre Dame in slow process of building : furthermore, and important to us, the Abbeys of Ste. Geneviève and of St.-Germain-des-Prés ; and in its earlier phase the church of St. Etienne-du-Mont, with some other palaces churches marchés and religious edifices ; and a great population crowding the narrow unpaved and unspeakably filthy streets of wooden hovels nodding to each other. St. Etienne was then by no means the wonder of mixed architecture we admire in it now : three or four centuries after our tale it had its

Renaissance resurrection and became the quaint and elegant commixture of Gothic and Italian, with aerial spiral staircases, arches above arches, and elaborate decoration within, and towers and gargoyles, buttresses and minarets without, which attract the sightseer at present ; but in those most olden days of ours it was a plain stone chapel of the Norman stamp, built over the tomb of Ste. Geneviève ; large, religiously dim, and flanked by its celtic round-tower.

Stephan's "testamur" from the Abbot and Council of Rouen was addressed to the Superior of St.-Germain-des-Prés : but we need not wonder if in the then state of his mind, as well as that of all the world around him, he preferred to attach himself to a Virgin-Martyr's neighbouring Abbey, and to a church peculiarly his own as dedicated to his namesake St. Etienne.

How little can we calculate, when we take the slightest onward step in life, its possible—its fated consequences : how continually have

we need of guidance through the darkness, and therefore of the wise man's merciful aid and help thereto, habitual prayer. Who can tell what an hour may bring forth? We are at the mercy of Circumstance whithersoever we go; and need constantly the whispered admonition, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

I will not, however, seem to hint that this was not the right way to our Abelaïrd, but it was in some sort a trial way, an ordeal; and well endured, became a good gain also: as we shall see. Listen now. I pass over common matters of the outward man. Stephan had of course become a cowled monk from a forester on the untell-tale Seine, duly presented himself and his letters at St. Germain, been welcomed, staid there a few days, and found the place and brethren uncongenial: thence on some pretext of his name (a valid argument in those days as before hinted) passed himself on to Ste. Geneviève's Abbey (for Alice's sake, no doubt)

and thus became attached as a mass-priest to its especial chapel St.-Etienne-du-Mont.

He first entered it for prayer at nightfall : and forthwith prostrated himself (I do not justify this, nor any other idolatries, but needs must be historical) before the Virgin-martyr's shrine. He was alone, and the chapel was in twilight, gradually darkening : and at Geneviève's shrine he prayed till midnight—prayed for the weal of Alice.

The shrine is in a transept ; and over the tomb was then (however rebuildings and revolutionary times may have since brought changes) a beautifully carved and painted stone figure of Ste. Geneviève lying as in death upon her bier.

Stephan was praying still in darkness, when the risen moon began to shine through the high altar window : a ray soon travelled towards him ; and it fell on the laid out figure of Ste. Geneviève.

Was he dreaming,—ecstatic,—crazed?—No.

He quietly felt his own calm pulse, thought out a mathematical problem, prayed a Christian's prayer. And yet, there undoubtedly lying in the moonlight was his own Alice, her sweet Madonna face, her golden curls, her white hands crossed upon her breasts, precisely as he had seen her at St. Martha's. The exactness of the likeness astonished him. However, it was no more than a coincidence; and that a happy one. How good it was for him to be there! And so, after one more ecstasy of prayer he returned all the more gratefully and devoutly to his solitary cell.

For several days, to the admiration of the inmates of Ste. Geneviève's specially honoured church St. Etienne, our monk increased if possible his devotions at that blessed shrine: he felt as if in the presence of his own sweet Alice; there she lay, exactly as he last remembered her.

He became so wrapt in these habitual reveries and prayers, that he took small notice, none in fact, of a veiled female figure often kneeling near him at the shrine (she was at the feet, while he loved chiefly to be nearest to that sweet calm face;) but one morning as he came to pray there, and the veiled girl was even then thus early at the virgin-martyr's feet, he was utterly astonished to see the image of Ste. Geneviève, that exact sweet likeness, the Madonna face, the golden hair, the soft blue eye,—he almost fainted and disbelieved his fancy as he saw it,—coronalled with hyacinths!

What could it mean?

He only prayed all the more earnestly, as in presence of a manifest miracle: and when he rose, the girl,—at least it was as before a veiled figure, rose with him; and she said in a voice whose tones of strange resemblance thrilled him,

“ Good father, thou seemest to be the priest

of my saint and patroness ; may a poor young daughter confess to thee for her soul's well-being ?”

“ Yea, sister : here is a confessional. Speak, and I will comfort thee, if in anywise I may. Many days, sister, have we knelt and wept together. Tell me thy grief.”

“ Father, to Ste. Geneviève I came for help, if God and the saint so willed ; not because my name is Geneviève, for it is Angélique ; but for the simple reason that my friends have thought me like her and so that haply she might favour me : and I have a sad sorrow.”

“ Sister, if I can comfort thee, I will. I too have had my sorrows,—have them now, yea now : and I wot they are only to be borne, not healed in this world ; but speak, sister, freely, as to God and His priest.”

“ My father, it may seem to thy wisdom a folly, perhaps a sin ; but—I love one whom I never may wed with.”

Stephan answered nothing; but on the other side of the confessional lattice fell back, groaning inwardly but inaudibly. The girl proceeded,

“Father, thou canst not I know comfort me, as thou mayst not commend me for this; I know it, for thou art silent. But it was not any fault of mine. He loved me too, I am sure he did, he often told me so. But, I caught the fever, and they thought me dead, and laid me out for burial,—just like sweet Sainte Geneviève here,—and, distracted at the sight—”

“Alas! my sister, I guess thy grief—did he go mad?”

“No, father, he is sane as thou art,—but at once became a monk! I saw his despair, I heard the rashness of his vow, I pitied him, loved him, and would gladly have died to save him, but the cruel fever bound me like the dead; and I could not speak, nor do anything but lie

quietly there, seeming dead but not being so. O father,—that he should have rashly—alas for me, cruelly—flown to the nearest convent, and vowed himself a monk upon its relics!”

Stephan groaned audibly : and the poor maid took it (she was right enough) for his sympathy. So she continued;

“I loved thee, father, too, because thou art of his same height, and hast his noble open brow, his air, his dark locks, his very speech : at first I thought thee mine own dearest—”

“Child,” said Stephan, wisely constraining himself, and in fatherly kindness checking her, “I am here to take confession of thy sin, if haply through repentance my power may absolve thee.”

The poor girl, as if rebuked, looked up suddenly without her veil : and, but for the impossibility, there knelt Alice beside him ! The same sweet innocent face, the same imploring soft blue eye, the same golden flood of ringlets.

Stephan Langton, strong man and wise as he was, almost reeled in his stall as he sat : a thought came to his help.

“Why didst thou crown the saint with hyacinths to-day, sister?”

“Father,—it is my birthday, this first of May,—and I did it to please her, if it might be; the blue bells are comely in that golden hair.”

How startling the coincidence in every way ! and here was Stephan, hardly victor of himself in the quietest times, with his yearning eyes enchanted by this very type of her he loved so much, his eager ears entranced by her “I love thee.”

He strove to think of Alice far away : and instantly, from that net-worked association of ideas the metaphysician tells us of, all those old perilous thoughts and feelings rising like a flood threatened to overwhelm him tumultuously, and upset the philosophy of years.

He tried to speak to this poor unconscious girl, whose presence so bewitched him,—but his tongue was paralysed; and when in a sweetly pleading tone, so like *her's*, his ear caught

“Wilt thou not comfort me,—”

Stephan with a mental prayer breaking the spell, dropped the cowl over his agitated features, and, to that suppliant's sad astonishment, hurried abruptly out of the chapel.

CHAPTER III.

A Court-day at the Louvre.

IN his cell the strife continued ; here was as it were the real Alice out-charming the ideal :— and then, that she should have found some loved-one's likeness in him also !

Ha ! clearly this was an artifice to entrap him : yet instinctively he shrank from the idea that such a counterpart of Alice could deceive.

No, no : that would be an imputation on herself, if this sweet resemblance could be so wicked. And he kissed the withered chaplet and the golden curl, and tried to dream in

waking reveries of his ideal love ; but the real—this other present type in beauteous flesh and blood intruded on his tenderest thoughts and vexed him.

Stephan, as a Prælector of Moral Philosophy, knew that the best cure for this unwholesome state of mind was active energy in some other direction : and ere that night of self-wrestling had died with morning's dawn, had determined to be up and doing for his other love, his country.

On his first arrival at St.-Germain-des-Prés, he had taken care to forward through the Prior (who had first perused and approved them) his Rouen and Newark testimonials, to the Louvre, Philip's newly enlarged suburban palace : together with a letter from himself, soliciting an audience of the King, announcing his status as a churchman and his condition as a persecuted foe to the usurping John ; and further how that he was the bearer of a precious present from

the East to his most Christian Highness: (for "Majesty" was not assumed by kings till Charles the Fifth of Spain invented that new name for his imperial greatness.)

Whether or not those credentials and that letter had yet reached Philip, Langton could not guess: Circumlocution and Red-tape were potent bafflers doubtless even then to plebeian merit or access, and monarchy was hedged about with quite as many aristocratic barriers as now: but at all events Stephan resolved to call and see what had become of his papers: and he took with him one of his four remainder morsels, duly sealed in its separate vellum, to be ready for use if he was lucky enough to gain admittance.

The Louvre, then just outside Paris, though attached to it and enclosed in its own battlemented *enceinte* with round towers, was a quadrangular building chiefly of the Norman type but with extinguisher spires crowning six of the

turrets, and a very high-pitched roof, well vaned as all the spires were, just over the castellated entrance.

Stephan, accompanied for introduction-sake by a well-known brother of his College des Prés, easily got admission as far as an ante-chamber, for the King it seems was holding his court; and, the St. Germain's brother having spoken to a captain of the halberdiers, he found his way still farther advanced. At this point, on giving his name to an officer, duly passed on through a succession of others, Stephan after waiting awhile was addressed by a gorgeously-arrayed chamberlain, who bade him follow to the hall of the Presence: informing him by the way that the King had been expecting his promised gift for three days, having duly mastered the testamurs and being ready to receive M. le Prélecteur the so-celebrated Père Langton with all favour.

Of course, the Circumlocution office had not

yet found time to expedite the royal message.

Stephan entered, announced by the chamberlain.

At the end of a long low-arched audience-hall, on a floor raised three steps, was marshalled the royal Court in a semi-circle: the chamber itself being lined with Philip's newly-appointed body-guard of Ribauds, tall young fellows in a parti-coloured uniform and armed with gilt-iron maces. There were also a multitude of others, courtiers, soldiers and various household functionaries in fancy costumes; with whom happily we have nothing to do: for Stephan's business, and therefore ours, is more nobly with the royal Court itself.

In the centre sat of course the King enthroned: plainly dressed in that most unbecoming of colours, the St. Esprit light blue; with a red velvet cap and a jewel in it. The countenance of His Highness Philip le Dieudonné was

decidedly unprepossessing; a pale shrewd face, full of mingled cunning and sternness. Just at this moment, early in May 1202, (his likings and dislikings oscillating in accordance with his ever-shifting politics) he was self-installed the protector of Prince Arthur, and the indignant vindicator of his injured right. And there stood the Prince at Philip's left (for Louis the Dauphin a feeble-looking young man kept the royal right-hand as heir apparent) and next to him the hard-featured Constance of Bretagne, dressed in black and white like a Sister of Charity, but wearing a pearl coronet. Prince Arthur her son, a well-grown lad, with a bold but open and good-natured expression of countenance, richly dressed in all the heraldic blazon of England, looked the only true scion of royalty there: and all round these great personages in a splendid crowd were the lords and ladies in attendance.

“Let the learned doctor approach, Sir Chamberlain; we know his merit and his fame, and

how well-affected he standeth to King Arthur : demand of him that present he hath brought us from the East.”

Stephan, with an obeisance, produced so very small a parcel, that the Court seemed in peril of losing its gravity.

“ Well, Professor, this is indeed a mouse out of a mountain ; promise and performance should be paired more nearly, methinks.”

“ Pardon, great King,—and pardon Madam and my Royal Liege, if I expound this treasure to your Graces.”

Evidently their Graces thought the man an enthusiast, some nostrum-doctor perhaps, for there was an irreverent tittering ; which however King Philip stopped at once by saying,

“ Thou hast our leave, good Doctor, but be brief.”

Stephan carefully exhibited the yet-unopened seal to the Chamberlain, desiring him to show it to the King before he opened it : the parcel

went round the royal circle amid guessings and whisperings,—“a talisman,” “some wondrous cat’s-eye,” “Solomon’s ring,” &c., and was then handed back to Stephan.

He broke the seal, and read as follows :

“We, François, Abbot of the St. Augustin College at Rouen, Robert, Mayor of Rouen, and Hugues Carnet, sworn notary public, with our assessors and witnesses legally subscribing below, testify to all men that, attached to this enclosure sealed with the seal of the college as aforesaid, is a genuine and authentic fragment of the True Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Our unbelieving age will scarce conceive such a result possible ; but when, after these simple words, Stephan Langton falling on his knees held up the open scroll with that precious morsel in a silk pocket atop, the whole Court also knelt simultaneously and reverently as when the Host is raised, and the gilt-iron maces of those awed Ribauds clattered like grounded arms on the stone floor.

CHAPTER IV.

The Cunning of Philip Augustus.

STEPHAN afterwards had a private audience of the King, and explained to him in detail the whole story of the wondrous relic, so acceptable even to a mighty potentate ; for the blind ignorance of that age regarded such a gift as little less than that of immortality : to say nothing of the miracles that morsel would be sure to work, and the vast money-value thereof, its fortunate possessor might assuredly defy the powers of hell and death. Even the learned Langton, as we have seen, was biassed by this

prevalent superstition ; and truly believed that he had conferred a priceless boon upon the foreign monarch.

It is small wonder therefore, that, not with what we should uncharitably call adroitness, but rather actuated by a sense of what royal gratitude might justly be glad to return for such an unspeakable gift, Stephan immediately, as a great benefactor might, pleaded for his injured country. Would the illustrious and august Philip set Arthur on the throne of that usurper ? the barons and the people of England writhing under the tyranny of John, were ready to welcome the brotherly aid of France in giving them their lawful king ; and he, Stephan, could depose of his own knowledge to a vast majority of the great feudatories of the realm, with whom he was in correspondence, as favouring the movement. Would his most Christian Highness head it openly by force of arms ?

But the astute Philip had deeper and darker

designs, which history afterwards has developed : his own son Louis, married to John's niece Blanche of Castille, might possibly himself come to be King of England, if Arthur were out of the way and John's family present or future deposed for their ill father's sake : so Philip temporized with the powerful monk, and thought to play his own game keenly. At present—it was only for a few months,—he protected the chivalrous young Arthur ; but designed, in furtherance of his own ambitious views, to betray him to his uncle shortly.

Meanwhile, it was expedient to conciliate as well as only equitable to reward this useful Englishman, who (beside being in himself a fund of political capital to the king) had conferred on the man more than a crown-jewel in that relic. And thus, by a letter mandatory from King Philip the Second to his dutiful University of Paris, Stephan Langton a brother

of Newark Priory and priest of the altar of St. Thomas à Becket at St. Martha's, in the county of Surrey in the realm of England, afterwards Prælector in divinity to the College of Rouen in Normandy, and now a brother of St.-Germain-des-Prés, is made a Canon of Paris and Dean of Rheims.

It was a sop that cost the king nothing ; and so, looking on his precious relic, he counted the bargain a good one : besides that in Langton he had a hold on many barons, well inclined, from their hatred of King John, to alter the demission of the crown.

As for Stephan, though he had not gained all he asked or wished, still he could not but feel this unexpected advancement a long step in the right direction. Absolutely out of John's reach, and still corresponding with half England through his emissaries, (for it is not necessary now to suppose Hal the only patriotic postman)

he could work more widely and influentially for his country's good ; and might anon by the church's ladder mount high enough to set his heel upon the head of him who now disgraced the crown.

CHAPTER V.

Angelique : and news of a Brother.

FOR four whole days Stephan had not knelt at the shrine of Ste. Geneviève : he dreaded to meet that veiled sweet stranger. But on the fifth, supposing her patience worn out or the magic power of her presence at an end, and half despising his own weakness in this matter, we find Stephan Langton once more alone beside that blessed image in fervent prayer and weeping like a child. In common with many other enthusiasts, he mixed up love christianity and idolatry in a most human yet injurious

compound ; and at this period of his life, in spite of study and eloquence clerical advancement and political patriotism, was in peril of wrecking both mental morals and spiritual religion on the rock of the real and tangible.

Next morning, he went early as of course to pay his orisons at the shrine ; it always must be quite early or quite late, that he might be sure to find himself alone with his idol : at other hours folks went in and out of the chapel : so he went there habitually either at dusk or at dawn.

As he crept in softly and was nearing the saint's side chapel in the dimness, he discerned that mysterious veiled female figure already kneeling at the feet : at first, he instinctively shrank back and would have gone out, for fear of what his spirit dreaded like an infection ; but the rustle of his robe in that silent chapel caught her ear, and she suddenly turned on him the same sweet face, so eloquent of far-off

Alice, so piteous with weeping and entreaty.

It was impossible that poor girl could be an actress, a profligate, a designing despicable hypocrite of love and feeling ; all was manifestly real.

She rose to meet him : and he trembled as he stood, leaning against a column.

“Father, why didst thou leave me ? I am alone, alone in the world ; and the sweet sisters of Ste. Geneviève help me for the saint’s sake : but she is unkind, and hath not helped nor answered.”

Stephan could not say a word : something in his throat choked him.

“Father, thou canst not, I am sure, be unkind : for thou art so like him who once was all kindness to me,—have pity on me, for in thy blessed presence—”

“Child,—as a priest and confessor I rebuke thee ; yet,” he added quickly seeing her emotion,

“only in faithfulness, maiden, and not as unkindly, for Stephan Langton—”

“Ha ! say that name again,—it is as like his, as thou art like him !”

“Sister,” calmly answered Stephan with a strange light breaking in upon him, “I had a brother once, but have not seen or heard of him these five and twenty years : canst thou possibly know anything of Simon Langton ?”

“His name,—his very own dear name ! and thou his brother ?”

“Yea, sister : and be calm ; lean on my hand : tell me quietly, where is he ?” Stephan was now the strong man again ; that enervating mist of evil was dispersed. “Speak freely, dear sister, an thou knowest ; where is my long-lost brother ?”

“At Rome : a whole world away from me ; my mother died soon after he had taken the cowl at St. Germain’s,—and he said he dared not stay to be so nigh me : so he went away,

and left me with the sisterhood." Every word had its tear: and went like an arrow to the heart of Stephan.

How strange and perfect a coincidence! but not unmatched in the experience of some of us, who more than once have known a curiously resembling set of circumstances happen simultaneously to brothers or friends personally much alike. People of the same mould of body have oftentimes the same mould of mind, the same tastes, feelings, principles: and circumstance is swayed and fashioned much by these to every one of us.

So, Stephan was unto her henceforth as a brother; and from his own sorrows, for he told her all, he could counsel her, and comfort her, and teach her Whence to draw consolation for herself. For, all this strange and touching incident in his life taught our great Englishman a deep heart-lesson of theology that otherwise he never might have learnt; the true soul-peril

of image-worship, the material overshadowing the spiritual, as a deadly yew that kills all life beneath it. This was the first gleam on Langton's pure and susceptible but then darkly-seeing mind as to the evil of Rome's prime sin, idolatry.

CHAPTER VI.

Hal's Embassies.

HAL'S return one day after a long postal absence came to our hero as a good help in a great dilemma: for it enabled him to execute a wise and kind resolve that Stephan had somehow made for Angélique. But first, let us hear how Hal has sped in his several points of embassy.

The old father Hugh, safely stowed away at Wodetone again, had become the most popular gossip ever known in those parts. Endless stories, true ones too and wonderful as true,

chiefly to the honour of that redoubtable knight Sir Ralph, his whilome master, collected such audiences, that the good parish parsonry of Wodetone Aldeburie and St. Martha's had no small cause to envy old Hugh his eager congregations.

Furthermore, the half dubious heir Sir Reginald might now take up his heritage unanxiously; he was a right good man, but, having been in a false position for so many years, as not sure of his crusading uncle's death, nor able to take up his own knighthood, nor the absolute fee of his estates,—was unsettled and irritable until Hugh Langton's evidence made quite an altered man of him. Sir Reginald de Camois of Wodetone appeared now like to rival in county-side love and popularity that dear old nonagenarian lately deceased, Sir Tristrem de Braiose of Aldeburie.

Hugh had brought a spur for his master's heir by way of evidence of death; one of Sir

Ralph's own spurs, which the faithful esquire managed to disengage from the good Knight's mangled corpse when lying among the dead-heap of Tiberias : it was long kept in the family ; and has since, strangely enough, turned up as an exhumed archæological relic ; for (how it got there I know not) it was unearthed in 1849, in digging the foundations of St. Martha ; very near the two stone tombs I spoke of in the preface, and on the same day. This is a fact as the other is ; petty ones perhaps, as merely local ; still, truth is truth, and you may as well take the facts for what they are worth.

Hal's next embassy regarded politics and history. He called at many castles, leaving Langton's carefully cyphered letters everywhere. The realm was exasperated against John, principally for his recent miserable trucklings to France by way of gaining an ally against his own outraged subjects ; whom he had actually obliged to pay twenty thousand marks of tribute.

to Philip by a tax on the plough-lands of England: his excuse being dowry-money on the occasion of his niece's recent marriage with the Dauphin of France, an alliance much resented by Englishmen.

Furthermore, the tyrannical king had lately seized several castles of his Barons, because they had demanded of him a Bill of Rights: he had stolen away Isabella, the affianced bride of Count de la Marche, and forcibly made her his own wife, having divorced for no cause but a new wicked will his own Queen Avisia of Gloucester; he had starved to death in Corfe Castle and at Windsor several whole families of illustrious birth, who had either been his invited guests, or had surrendered themselves as hostages; and had been guilty of divers other acts of forcible criminal wantonness against some high-born demoiselles, which almost nothing but incipient madness could explain or excuse. England was sick of him:

so sick, as to find in her loathing bosom a party almost base enough to welcome a French King. Arthur indeed was there, an obvious and lawful substitute, but he was a mere lad, under the tutelage of an unpopular mother, and always in the power either of his uncle an open enemy, or of Philip misnamed Augustus, a false friend. England accounted that poor youth lost, especially as his mother Constance of Bretagne was a foolish and violent woman; and somehow the nation never rallied at his name. But we shall hear of him anon no doubt.

Hal's third embassy was, in the spirit of the times, one of transcendant importance; no less than exporting salvation in the shape of a piece of rotten wood to Sister Alice. Happily for her, that good and pure and chastened spirit, full of charity and good works, disinterested, self-sacrificed and believing, needed no such treacherous stimulant to piety, no such

lying test of safety ; but the fragment had its uses nevertheless.

When Hal brought it to the nunnery, the good old Abbess Ursula de Loseley was lying in the article of death : she had been a first-rate chief, governing her forty females (no easy team to drive) not only creditably, but comfortably ; everybody loved her ; and they respected very obediently her express wish that the holy sister of St. Martha's, the nun Alice, so known for fervency in devotion and activity in good works among the poor and sick, should be her successor as Abbess. Hal's coming,—and his priceless gift from Stephan of that testimonied morsel of wood, availed still more powerfully to influence the scale in the feminine election : the owner of such a treasure to the Nunnery as a piece of the True Cross must be undeniably the triumphant candidate ; Joan of Chinthurst, however pertinacious and ambitious, and Anne de Worplesdon, however well-dowered and a

knight's daughter, even they gave in their votes to Alice, though chief candidates otherwise themselves, directly they heard of this astonishing rise in her religious fortunes. No Pope could be spiritually richer.

As for Alice herself, she a simple true-hearted loving woman was not deceived by any such conventional values: nor indeed by anything but her own weak heart. She received the relic with all honour,—but I must say paid more kissing and crying attention to the letter that accompanied it,—and acquiesced duteously rather than heartily in the unanimous choice of her sister nuns, and the dying recommendation of the good old Abbess Ursula.

As to Hal, the bearer of that precious fragment, he was the most popular person ever known at St. Catherine's; whether or not they kissed the poor old unconscious Mercury all round, I know not,—Hal never told upon them if they did—but all I know is they would have

thought it quite a privilege to do so : the bearer of such a relic was holy from the contact alone.

And now for Stephan's design. This poor young thing, this orphan Angélique, cannot be left alone in Paris, cannot dwell with him anywhere, cannot go to Romé or be with Simon ; her true home must be St. Catherine's Nunnery ; where Alice—her twin spiritual sister, will give that widowed heart a sympathizing widowed heart to rest upon, and in communion of congenial griefs both render and receive deep comfort.

CHAPTER VII.

Angelique's adventure by the way.

IN the execution of this wise and brotherly arrangement, Hal, the everfaithful evershrewd and everuseful Hal, was of course our Stephan's safe ally. Preliminaries were easily settled : the sisters of Ste. Geneviève had no hold but that of charity on the fair orphan, and when Stephan's blood-relationship to her betrothed and his desire to place her in an English nunnery were known, (to say less of the girl's own wishes) the thing was obvious : and those kind sisters

prepared with alacrity her necessary wardrobe and all other viatica.

As for Hal, he was always ready ; and had so organized his means of going and coming, that he now thought little of the way or its perils. Down the Seine to Havre was at all events a swift and easy voyage, pleasant withal and safe ; for Hal had made scores of friends among the rough but kindly river population, and his boat was as full of wraps and comforts as a selfdepending Englishman usually contrives to stow around him. Then they stopped o' nights at Hal's various resting-places on such a voyage (for it was impossible to steer the craft safely through those torrents and shallows in the dark) and Angélique, to whose girlish mind all this was delightful novelty, really in spite of her heart-sorrow never had been so happy in her life. Stephan had, I need hardly say, not only ordered all proceedings with ample liberality and the most thoughtful kindness, nor only

parted from his semi-sister with affectionate regret, but also consigned her to Alice in a letter the very quintessence of love, all the warmer and choicer now from something of a compunctious reaction : undoubtedly for a day or two, merely from the magic of a likeness, the sweet stranger had touched his heart-strings more as Alice might herself have done than he could have conjectured possible : but the moment he discovered her relationship, that irritating spell was broken, and Alice, only Alice, was once again to him and more than ever the real love as well as the ideal. In that letter, he even could confess to her frankly, how strangely moved he had felt towards Angélique for having Alice's own hair and eyes and voice ; how much more then, when he made that unlooked-for discovery of his long-lost brother's own affianced in her. And then, how touching and extraordinary the whole coincidence of Simon's love and its catastrophe with his own : how absolutely

truth was stranger than fiction, in this story of a double pair of love's heart-martyrs. Surely Alice would rejoice in this sweet sister all the more for these many points of sympathy; surely they would comfort one another, bless one another.

Meanwhile good Hal, who knew well how to match his disguises according to his geography (an acolyte in Paris, a fisherman on the Seine, a forester in Surrey, and a religious palmer or soldier-pilgrim whenever his various missions required such a rôle) had got safely to Havre with his precious freight of Angélique and luggage and letters: and thence a seafaring friend, duly paid of course and that handsomely for so perilous a voyage, transported them across channel, and landed them one fine afternoon of early spring at the mean little fishing town of St. Brighthelms.

Here, having taken due refreshment and a night's rest after those two wretched days and

nights of seasickness (poor Angélique utterly forgot Simon and Stephan and everything else) they left next morning the miserable but welcome *hostelrie*; and engaging a string of packhorses with their attendant leaders pushed on straight over the Devil's Dyke and that perilous marshy track the weald of Sussex, to Horse-ham: a wretched collection of hovels and stabling, so named because at this point even packhorses became, from the state of the tracks an impossibility. All travellers were wont to change their bearers here, leaving the "horses" at "home," and taking up with surer-footed mules instead: seeing that, in the deep and tenacious clay of the district, the only progress was over prostrate trees, lumps of faggotting laid upon quagmires, and in some places piles driven perpendicularly into the mud-holes, but indifferently regular as to height. No creature but a mule could pick its way for the ten miles between Horse-ham and Fitz-

Walter's Surrey offset of his same-named Essex home, Castle-Baynard's: the country was a jungle of magnificent oak forest, undisturbed since Noah's flood, swarming with wild hogs on paunage,—but almost floating too in a mighty sea of mud, where iguanodons and ichthyosauri probably have lingered latest on our drowned earth: and the track through all this mess, winding and “corduroy” as I have described it, may well be believed perilous, when (beside the physical difficulties of the way) we take into account also its moral or rather immoral ones, as robbers and freelances, and its dangers of a more mixed quality, as wolves, bears, and (though very rarely) an occasional bison bull or urus.

However, through good providence and its normal help thereto good prudence, our travellers and their motley train of ten bundle-laden mules with cow-skinned theows attending, duly got into the court-yard of old Baynard's, a cas-

tellated pile of heavy oaken timbers and rough ragstone masonry that stood like a cliff among the sea of oaks luxuriantly spreading in every direction for miles and miles around it.

Hal's embassy here was a patriotic one and a political: howbeit, let us do his generalship the justice to acknowledge, that Baynard's is directly in the crow's flight between St. Bright-helm's town and our nunnery of St. Catherine's near Gilford. Hal was a man to be trusted, and had a mind for combinations.

Angélique well-cared for by the lady part of the family,—and the theows with their jaded muddy mules made happy after their kind by their congeners the baronial serfs, Hal had, as oftentimes before, his confidential audience with Fitz-Walter: who had retired to this his almost inaccessible castle the duplicate Baynard's, because John had seized and burnt its namesake near Dunmow, and had spread his mercenary toils in every direction to capture the Baron and

his family; and if caught certainly to destroy them, but whether by any less dreadful mode than starvation or flaying or burning alive depended on the caprice of England's detested tyrant. So then Hal was most welcome; as Stephan had matured a plan for the escape of Fitz-Walter, Saher de Quincey Earl of Winchester, John de Toupart and a few other chief patriots, then deprived of their estates and in imminent peril of life, through Normandy into France: and, if unable to leave Normandy, at all events finding safe refuge there in the favouring fortress of Reuil.

But I will not stop my story to enter into its collateral details, which must be suggested by allusion as we from time to time come near them. Our immediate errand now is to get Angélique safely to St. Catherine's: no easy matter, as Hal soon learnt; for beyond the marshy weald the whole country was full of John's marauding Brabançons and Espagnoles;

added to which, as Fitz-Walter's people innocently observed, there was the dread of travellers falling into the hands of Robin Hood and his outlaws; known to be in the immediate neighbourhood.

Hal said nothing, but saw at once the flower safety in the midst of the nettle danger: so, ascertaining from a cunning kerne (like enough from his love of sport and peril to attach himself anon to Robin's band) whereabouts the outlaws lay, Hal resolved to steer towards them, assured of being thereby well expedited afterwards to his journey's end.

But first for a fitting disguise: obviously the safest mask would be, as it usually is, religion: a young nun on her mule escorted by an ancient palmer and reputedly attended by an armed retinue of kernes and loaded beasts of baggage would be more likely to pass well (not however without toll taken, and perhaps a broken coxcomb or two by the outsiders) through that

infested countryside, than any other less respectable party : many a loose marauder and bloody brigand would in those days of simple superstition be turned from his purposed ill by the mere presence of one clad in the livery of Heaven.

Thus then taking leave of their kind hosts, Hal now nearabout in his own country led the way through the wood in single file towards the notable eminence overlooking Horse-block Hollow, as he knew that Robin's out-lying corps lay in the Hurtwood beyond : and the party were just emerging from the Hollow and slowly traversing the rugged heights between Ewhurst and Winterfold Hill enjoying its magnificent prospect over the best part of three counties, when—all at once to Hal's dismay they came suddenly upon a large mounted patrol of Brabançons ; those vile and cruel mercenaries of John who were more to be dreaded than wild beasts.

Hal whispered an order to three or four of the kernes ; and immediately they were running forward towards different parts of the extensive wilderness around, known as the Hurtwood : his only hope was Robin,—and temporizing measures meanwhile. He also bade the mule-men, quite contrary to their own suggestions but Hal had the mind of a general, to run away with the baggage-beasts in every direction the moment he and the nun were stopped.

“ Halt there ! Sir Palmer : and our gentle sister too under the hood must tarry awhile : stop, I say, Sirrah ! ”

Hal, who had been innocently leading his mule past in quick march, stopped meekly at the word, crossing his arms over the long brown hooded garment that concealed his forester dress and its appointments : and the nun also stopped with a surprised but graceful acknowledgment of the rough knight's presence.

“ Merlebois, quick ! those kernes must be

followed and their mule-packs overhauled : quick, or they'll escape us in the bush : let each be followed separately three to one ; and keep thou the trail in sight and leave me alone with the palmer."

"Ay, and with the nun too, Sir Fulk de Cantelupe : isn't it so, Knight ?"

The men-at-arms, some thirty of them with their lieutenant, were soon plunging with their heavy horses up and down that cliffy escarpment in all directions, but proved no match for mules or kernes among such break-neck places ; and were soon lost to sight over the ridge.

"And now, fair sister, with your gracious permission,—a sight of that pretty face would gladden the very eye of morning. Come now, no coyness, I will have a peep at it. Here, old man,—hold my horse : your mule can take care of itself. Nay then—but I will—"

The meek old palmer behind him suddenly

blew such a blast close to that false knight's ear as well-nigh cracked the tympanum !

“ Devils ! what was that ? ”

Nobody but a meek old palmer stood beside him. And that blast did its duty otherwise too, for Hal thought he heard an echo from the Hurtwood.

“ Beware of that holy sister, Sir Knight : she hath ere now been miraculously defended ! ”

“ Saints and devils ! but I well can trow it true ; why, I'll swear that's the face of a girl who was burnt at Tangle ! ”

“ Ay, Sir Knight,” shrewdly quoth the temporizing Hal, perceiving his superstitious bent, and himself aware (as you are) of all circumstances,—“ Ay, and truly so : that miraculous face with the blue eyes and the golden hair hath blinded men ere now : therefore is the sister always veiled.”

“ I protest though, she is pretty enough—

for I caught a peep—to make one covet blindness:—and then, father, to be safe I can kiss it with my eyes shut: so—nay now no struggling,—one kiss in the dark.”

Another horn, but this time a more distant one, again miraculously stopped both word and deed; but, (as that recreant Knight, possibly supposing from this less furious blast that the protecting spell got weaker, continued his unpleasant attentions, and that horn requiring its echo), the Palmer flung off his brown cloak, and openly blared away as loud as before.

“Ha! the traitor-churl!” and Cantelupe with lifted steel was preparing to cut down the forester, who however brandishing his knife seemed right well able to defend himself, when—a low whistle attracting his eye to a thicket, he suddenly was made aware of a bent bow and a shaft, and a face peering over it; awkward that.

But look! here are Merlebois and his patrol

guard hurrying back from all points at the last bugle-blast, and some of those baggage mules with them : only—that archer's transfixing eye still kept Cantelupe in check, and he didn't dare to move a muscle.

“Why, what's come to our Captain? bewitched by a nun into the statue of Achilles? Forward, men, and break the spell: Fulk, I say, what ails thee?”

As Merlebois and his men closed round their leader, whose eye was still fascinated by that rattlesnake archer, they took no notice (but Hal did) of the strange botanical fact that every bush of furze or bramble round appeared to have suddenly and silently fruited: an archer's green-capped head with a bent bow and arrow was everywhere cropping out of the thicket.

A tall dark man in Lincoln green sprang forward.

“Yield, Knight! every man of you is at my mercy.”

It was too true: those insolent Brabançons looked helplessly round at fifty bent bows over the bushes.

“Yield! I say: instantly fling your weapons down where you stand, John’s-men! Robin’s King here!”

All obeyed but two who lifted up their spears: in an instant each of them had a quivering arrow unpleasantly skewered through his right arm.

“Honest Hal o’ the Wood, I heard thy note yonder; and the runners told me thou wert in sore peril; if any man have wronged thee or imagined wrong against this holy demoizelle, speak out, and I’ll do justice.”

“Then, King Robin, while John-a-Naylor gathers up that sheaf o’ spears, let thirty of the merry men mount these Flemish geldings, and send the marauders home as best they may, disarmed, disgraced, unhorsed. As for this ruffian knight their captain, he deserves worse

and must suffer in his skin ; take thou his good steed and its purple velvet trappings for Maid Marian, his Florence suit of inlaid arms and armour for thyself ; and give me the cudgelling of him.—No, I'm growing too old to do it masterly ; let my deputy be delicate John.”

“ All as Hal has said !”

The sentence was quietly being carried out without a word more. The mercenaries became footmen and the merry men centaurs by an instant transformation. But all at once the veiled nun said in very pretty French to Robin,

[Fitz-Ooth, as I have said, was perfect in his native Norman tongue, which of course was Fulk de Cantelupe's too,—]

“ If the Knight will crave my pardon, I plead for him that he be spared the cudgel.”

De Cantelupe, not yet out of his armour, with the sincerest expression of gratitude in eye and action, fell to his knee beside her mule, and craved her pardon both heartily and humbly.

“We also bid thee keep that gimcrack armour, holiday-Knight ; but remember that thou owest a whole skin to a woman’s mercy ; and pay her back this kindness as thou mayst by mercy to women. However, thou goest home unhorsed, with all thy troop : and I keep this knightly sword of thine by way of hostaging thy troth : but thou art not to be envied a twelve mile march to Gilford this warm spring day in yon lobster suit of armour.”

Fulk de Cantelupe was undoubtedly being let off too easily ; at least so John-a-Naylor thought : he was spitting into his horny hands, twirling a quarter-staff, and longed to be after the business Hal had set him ; he and his oaken cudgel were stout enough to have battered the Knight black and blue even as he stood in that dainty suit of plate : but here was a disappointment indeed,—and blank was the lengthened visage of Little John. Robin’s word was law, however, and the good deed was not now to

be done: so that impatient quarter-staff was sullenly flung down.

But, when Robin's back was turned, and the Knight was tripping away delicately as Agag, herculean John-a-Naylor strode up behind him, and, just where joint armour gives place to a soft island of leather for the sake of a firm seat in the saddle, he dealt him one such a strenuous kick as to make the writhing coward roar again. The boot of the period (I need hardly say) was of bull-hide, with a thick ashen sole tipped and heeled with iron: heavier than a Cornish wrestler's.

And so Robin and his men, with Hal and Angélique, and all their mules and followers streamed away into the Hurtwood, leaving those forlorn John's-men half-raging and half-laughing all alone in the wilderness. How they got to Gilford Castle I know not; but I do know that when they did get there, not one of the menta-arms escaped corporal punishment for their

disgrace : and Merlebois and Fulk, though prime favourites of the King, were counted craven Knights for having given up so tamely both their swords and horses, and were for a long while shunned accordingly by all the court.

As for our travellers, the rest of their way was plain-sailing enough : a few of Robin's men gave them safe escort to St. Catherine's.

Alice was now the Superior : years had rolled by, and she will be (if I may divulge a lady's age) thirty-four this very next summer of 1203, having danced as our Mayday Queen of seventeen in 1186 : she has been exactly seventeen years before us ; and Stephan too : besides their sketch of antecedents. And now, just in this doubled year of her career, she is strangely to meet her featured double.

Hal, the privileged humble friend and faithful messenger so oft of hopeless love, was at once admitted to an interview to deliver another of

those precious letters : and he brought with him the veiled sister.

The new Abbess sat in an oriel, with a missal beside her and some needlework : there was also a handbell on the table, some blue hyacinths in a garden pot, a monastic casket with padlocks, and writing materials : beside the nunnery seal. The room was long and lowbrowed, wainscotted in black carved oak nearly up to the ceiling, and with an enormous open hearth and firedogs at the side opposite the great oriel window.

Hal approached her, and gave his letter, which Alice hastily and eagerly devoured with her eyes and heart.

“ Let my sweet sister come near me : I know thy story, and (as thou wottest) it is also mine own : lift thy veil, sister, and let us kiss one another.”

When Angélique lifted her veil, each of those fair-haired blue-eyed nuns seemed to be

looking on herself,—except that Alice as the elder was a trifle more matronly: but never sisters were so near alike, and never bosom-friends so loved each other. Let us leave them to their sweet and sympathizing communings, while I turn a black page in this tale.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Murderer and his Victim.

FOR Hal on his return journey had witnessed a deed of horror : unwillingly, helplessly, been witness to it : a deed, whereat all Europe then shrunk and quivered in dismay ; and that has touched the heart of men with pity for the victim and abhorrence of the murderer from that hour to this. With reference to the scene that now my pen must feebly trace, it is wise to give as well as to have authorities : seeing that the view here taken of it is not the common one ; and yet it is not only probably true, but likewise

actually so ; since our honest Hal was eye-witness to the catastrophe.

My details are founded on Tyrrell's History of England, folio, 1700 ; vol. 2, p. 721 : Gulielmi Britonis Philippidos, p. 166 ; (Brito lived about 1230, and as a cotemporary is a first rate witness :) The annals of Margan, quoted as Tom II. by Tyrrell and Thomson : and a paper in the twenty-second volume of the *Archæologia* by Mr. Hardy ; an Itinerary of the movements of King John from the Tower records.

On the night then of April the third 1203, Hal was leaving Rouen for Paris by his usual safest way, a fisher-boat on the Seine : he must leave by night to escape the riverguard, and as by good fortune it rained (he usually waited for this) there was much less chance of being stopped at the town's water-limits. So he had crept on board with his accustomed friend on such occasions, a well known Rouen pécheur,

and hugging the right bank to avoid currents, their light craft was slowly ascending the river.

Anon, in the desolate darkness, a boat passed them closely, with two rowers and one person astern; he was in a cloak and slouched cap, but evidently either a youth or a woman, for some long light curls fell over his shoulders. Hal wondered what the gallant could be after on such a dark night, and lately so wet too: but the boat went on, and Hal had his own reasons for hailing nobody.

Soon after another boat, swift and strongly manned, passed rapidly: somebody in it must have come from a revel, for he swore terribly, but all in the maudlin drunkard's note: there were ten rowers and a steerer, seemingly in the Brabant livery, and the half tipsy blaspheming passenger wore a plumed hat and rich crimson domino. Hal and his mate wondered as before;

and crept along close in shore faster in comparison than those outer boats that had to stem the current.

All at once, at a sharp bend of the river, they came flush upon the two boats, evidently pursued and pursuer; and a loud terrible oath "By God's teeth, ha!" startled the midnight as the galley ran into the skiff with a crash that clean capsized it: the two rowers swam for shore, nearly coming upon Hal's coracle; and the cloaked stranger with the fair long curls (a rising moon just showed them and the cap had fallen into the stream) was clinging for dear life to the rudder of the galley.

Instantly, in that telltale moonlight, with the same horrible oath the crimson stranger rushed to the stern, seized those streaming golden locks with one hand, and with the other dealt some cruel daggerstabs on the poor youth's body. Screams and groans and oaths terrified the silent night: but what could Hal do,—with his

wallet full of righteous treason against the wicked king? What could he and his mate, both pretty aged and unarmed to boot, do for rescue against a dozen armed mercenaries?

The horror deepened: for that murderer, mad with drink and crime, jaggedly hewed at the poor struggling neck with his dagger;—and, letting the body float down stream, like an exulting red demon flung the ringletted head into the galley!

That same morning early, a partner of Hal's fisher-friend found, caught in one of his weirs, the floating body headless: it was recognized by the under garments, albeit outwardly disguised, as Prince Arthur of Bretagne.

There are yet some details to be added. When John at the siege of Castle Mirabel had captured his unhappy nephew, he first imprisoned him at Falaise, the fortress birthplace of our first William. It is said that here John began by "promises of great Honours," then by "en-

treaties as his Lord and Uncle," to do his best to cajole Arthur into peaceable resignation of his heritage: but in vain, for the bold youth "answered him disdainfully, demanding his kingdom of England, and all the dominions King Richard died possessed of, as his Right by Inheritance." And then with many threats and reproaches John sent him prisoner to Rouen, to be kept in close custody by Robert Vipont, one of John's worst tools and parasites; as also were two of our other earliest bad acquaintances in this tale, Fawkes de Breauté and Fulk de Cantelupe.

The familiar name of Hubert de Burgh is popularly too much traduced amongst us, as if he were the weak but would-be torturer, or irresolute executioner of Arthur. In fact, he had many noble points of character; honest, brave, humane; faithful to the crown though worn so wickedly; and true to England, as was well evidenced by that sturdy stopping of Louis at

Dover in his ill-advised invasion. Hubert, thinking to save the Prince's life, did evil that good might come, and has smarted for it ever since; he falsely gave out that Duke Arthur was dead in prison, meaning thereby to secure his escape somehow; and he caused all the church-bells in Brittany to toll for him; but the Bretons were so exasperated, that Hubert was forced to tell them it was all a cheat to save the Prince's life: which coming to the King's ears he resolved to kill him outright.

First however, being craven enough not to wish to do the deed himself though bold and bad enough to instigate its perpetration, John asked a certain good Knight, who upon high-king principles had always conscientiously stuck to him, one William de Bray, (so Brito testifies) "to murder his nephew; but this personage plainly told ye King, he was a Gentleman and not a Hangman." Whereupon, after even the trustworthy Hubert's defalcation in the pre-

mises, and an utter distrust of such scoundrels as Vipont and Cantelupe, John resolved for absolute assurance to kill the youth with his own hand : the plan being, to induce Arthur to escape by a window from Rouen Castle to the Seine, and then to intercept him in his flight, as we have recorded it. The body *was* found by a fisherman headless, and the head itself never : the Annals of Glamorganshire Margan testify to the King's semi-drunkenness on the occasion, as well as to his peculiar and shocking oath : and Mr. Hardy has demonstrated from documents in the Record office that King John was at Rouen on the third day of April, 1203, the very day and year when Arthur disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.

The Churl arraigns the King.

OUR own witness however, honest Hal, was enough for Stephan ; who, horrified by the recital, hastened to set out the hideous details of the deed before Philip Augustus. Stephan had rapidly risen into high favour with that calculating King ;—and (death vacancies occurring, while his own merits amply justified the choice) was now Chancellor of the University of Paris, and Archbishop of Rheims. For it pleased Philip well to place in posts of honour one whom John did not scruple in a tone of

expostulation to call his “declared enemy, Stephan de Langton ;” more especially, as for learning, eloquence, and conduct Europe could not find his parallel : and most especially, because he hoped by Langton’s potent influences to play his own game of self-aggrandizement in the humiliation of John.

Attended therefore by his faithful Hal, robed in suitable attire as a gentleman’s gentleman (in case his evidence for an eye-witness should be thought necessary) the Chancellor-Archbishop of Rheims demanded audience of the King, then holding a court in the Palais de Justice.

I need not lengthily repeat the dreadful story, —which, in open conclave of the barons, knights, justiciaries, and other great officers of France assembled before the King in Council, Stephan Archbishop of Rheims and his faithful servitor detailed to the horror of all present. The keen Philip at once saw and seized his advantage ; commanding that “John of England, Duke of

Normandy, be forthwith summoned before his suzerain lord King Philip of France, and the Court of his Great Feudatories in Parliament assembled, to answer before them for the alleged murder within the Seignory of France of the son of his elder brother, a homager of the crown of France and a near kinsman of the King."

"My Lord Archbishop of Rheims is public accuser in this case before the Homage."

Stephan bowed obedience; the Churl—mitred and in full canonicals and invested with the Chancellor's golden collar—was indeed subduing the King.

"Let the heralds duly proclaim a set day for trial of this cause: and let legal notice be given to the aforesaid Duke of Normandy to appear before us his suzerain lord and the Homage, on that day to answer the charges against him."

The set day came. In the vast hall of the Palace were again assembled all the Great

Feudatories of the kingdom : a magnificent crowd, of armour heraldry nodding crests and blazoned banners : with the King in a full suit of gilt-chain armour, and a gemmed circlet of gold around his casque, throned on the centre of the dais. Beside him on his right stood the Dauphin in an engraved suite of Florentine plate, and wearing a blue scarf : on his left Constance of Bretagne the bereaved and distracted mother seated—or rather half lying on a couch, sobbing audibly, was clad in the deepest mourning : above the monarch's head waved the Oriflamme of France, red silk with golden flames across it, brought specially for this great occasion, as usual when all the royal vassals are summoned, from the Abbey of St. Denis.

Stephan, robed mitred and crozied, stood near a table covered at one end with the sacred blue mantle of St. Martin : at which were several scribes with ink-horns quills and parchment : and Hal, apparelled as a lay acolyte, was

stationed behind the Archbishop. The rest of that vast hall was filled, as I said, by a gorgeous and flashing crowd of steel and colour. All stood, except the King, and by grace the Duchess Constance : but at a wave of the King's hand simultaneously with a clatter and a crash all those armoured knights were seated.

The proceedings are too technical, too verbose and too uninteresting to occupy any lengthened space in our story. I can but touch a point or two, without affecting to give an exact or verbatim report.

When John was formally summoned, Eustace Bishop of Ely and Hubert de Burgh Earl of Kent stood forward as his ambassadors, demanding to know "whether their Master, if he appeared in person at that or any like court, would have safe conduct for his coming and going?"

Whereto King Philip answered with his usual severe astuteness, "He may come in peace."

But the Bishop replied "may he return so?"

The King answered "Yea, if the sentence of his peers permit him."

Then those ambassadors pressing the point of safe conduct both ways, the King got angry, and "swore by all the saints in France, that it should only be so according to the judgment of the court."

Whereupon the ambassadors withdrew; and on John's summons thrice by the herald, neither he nor any one as his attorney made appearance.

So therefore, when Stephan de Langton and our important witness his lay acolyte had plainly stated all the facts before that horrified assembly, judgment on the criminal passed by default: and "as a traytor a felon and a parricide he was condemned to forfeit all his Seignories and fiefs which he held by homage of the crown of France;" and it was resolved that the re-entry

of his suzerain lord be made by force of arms.

So it came to pass that Philip and his lords determined on the forcible reconquest of Normandy: an easy task with no one heartily willing to oppose it. Hugh de Gournay without a blow surrendered Montfort to him: as did Fitzwalter and De Quincey Castle Reuil: Falaise, Constance, Bayeux were quickly reduced, as also Arches and Verneuil; and only Rouen remained faithful to the hated John.

Meanwhile that recreant King behaved so wantonly for low debaucheries,—so weakly even to being “brisk and merry when he heard of a lost town,”—so cruelly by flayings, starvings, and murderings; so slothfully, as often lying a-bed for days together with his young Queen, of whom nevertheless he was ceaselessly so jealous that he hung several unfortunate courtiers over her in that genial nuptial couch,—so altogether madly, that in the spirit of the times

his nearest followers thought him "bewitched,"—and some since have, with Dr. Brady, apologetically written him down for "mad:" but it was the madness of a wicked conscience, the witchery of unrepented sin.

I care not to burden my tale with details of this Norman warfare; nor further of the horrors of John's career, except as incidentally: one sickens at his character and crimes, and (to withdraw an expression used earlier in this romance) one really finds this devil on better [or worse] acquaintance blacker than any yet have painted him.

As for the Dukedom of Normandy, and most of the other English fiefs in France, as Maine, Touraine, Poictou and Anjou, John the Twelfth and last Duke lost them speedily; so far as nearly all Normandy proper is concerned, within the very same year in which he murdered Arthur: a manifest judgment of Providence. Within that year in chief John, once more

Sansterre in France saving his original Guienne the ancient Aquitaine, was deprived of the grand three-century heritage of his ancestors: whereof now remain to England only those virgin islands, unconquered since they rose from Ocean's bosom, Guernsey and Jersey, the hospitable brave and beautiful; impregnable Alderney, and romantic Sark: all the old Norman laws and customs are still extant on those free and pleasant shores: and happy are the people who can call them Home, or look back on their inhabitants for Ancestry.

CHAPTER X.

An Acolyte and his Sister.

IN his many visits to England, we may safely rest assured that the affectionate Hal did not neglect his old master's family at Aldeburie, nor far less his own children there. In fact, he needed scarcely to diverge from a straight course to call at his old haunts; for among his many missives patriotic or otherwise, be sure he always bore a love-letter for Alice at the Nunnery.

Thus then, the Vale of St. Martha's came naturally in his way, and he kept up a constant

communication with those near and dear to him. Time flies fast,—and the pretty little children were growing into youths and maidens, not to say men and women: there had been five left to him, after that calamity of Shirebourne Pond; the three juniors of whom may remain unknown to us, except as two nameless stable-boys and a female scullery-child, who made themselves generally useful about the Braiose establishment; but with the two senior we must now become better acquainted as not unimportant characters in our tale.

I am not going to describe them; first, because every prudent reader skips with impatient indignation your regular novel catalogue of eyes lips and noses; and secondly, because Edmund Wood was a common-looking lad enough, large and coarse-featured, though kindly in heart and true of tongue; item, because his sister Millicent, though better favoured than her brother outwardly, had less of grace within: a morbid

vanity and self-esteem had from the very cradle made her envious, jealous, and false. She alone (I grieve to report it) had never wept for Emma's death; for with Emma's beauty and cheerfulness died a rival sister's influence over father, friends and family : to Millicent's selfish nature her drowning was undoubtedly a gain.

But Hal noted little of this evil in his child : he loved her only all the more because she was next to Emma, and his own generous nature could not suspect in Millicent such unsisterly meanness and want of feeling. It was "her way" to be tenacious and irritable : it was "her way" to make mischief, and throw out uncharitable hints against any whose merits or amiability excited her jealousy ; it was "her way" to be unpleasant and by consequence unpopular ; so folks let her have her way.

In truth this very unpopularity in the Braiose household, coming sharply to Hal's ears, induced him to desire some other home for his

daughter : and as Edmund too had manifestly outgrown pageship and was rather a superfluity in-doors, Hal resolved that he should seek his fortune elsewhere. The young man, finding himself not altogether at home as Sir Wilhelm's serving man (old Tristrem has been dead these four years and this is his grandson and heir) had long wished to join his father ; whose increasing years seemed likely enough to need some such comrade in his wanderings : while as for Millicent, ungracious and ungrateful minx, change of any sort, travel anywhither, a respite from the dullness of that Great House, and an escape from neighbours who had found her out and detested her, these were to her mind everything : she longed to get away.

When Hal therefore, in his next visit to Aldeburie, ventured humbly to hope that his Master's good Lady would spare to him these his two children, (and he offered to find a pair of likely serfs in lieu) the matter was easier than

he had dared to think probable ; for the Lady de Braiose gave them to him freely ; the young man was not fit for knightly servitude, and nobody liked the girl : so they were given up to the father, as he desired and beyond his hopes.

How he conveyed them away, an unexpected prize (for strong were the cords of serfage to place and person in those feudal times) and how he got them safe to Paris I need not stop to describe : we have had enough of perils by the way. But anon, we find, among the crowd of servitors in the Chancellor's household, Hal's two scions Edmund and Millicent, welcome to Paris and wondering at its bustle.

The young man, forthwith sent to learn reading and writing among the humbler scholars of the University, soon made progress, for he at all events had the merit of plodding industry : earnest and vigorous in all he undertook, and though far from a genius no fool

either, within a few months Edmund had more or less mastered those needful accomplishments, and could stand (by special favour as Hal's son) before his Master the Archbishop, an acolyte qualified for fair transcribing.

As for the sister, she cared not to accept (as first offered) the duties of nurse's-assistant in a hospital ; preferring unphilanthropically to help in the College dairy, and look after the fowls and pigs ; which, suffered to go loose about the streets of Paris during the day for the offal they might find, came home each night regularly for better fare. But Millicent according to her nature was envious of Edmund's new acquirements ; and preeminently jealous of his access to Monseigneur, and his probable advancement in the world far beyond herself.

CHAPTER XI.

Religion and its Persecutors.

STEPHAN LANGTON was now deeply engaged in the composition of those Commentaries on Holy Writ which have made his name so famous as an Ecclesiastical author. There were extant for centuries, and probably are so still, manuscript annotations from his hand of the whole Bible, chapter by chapter; which indeed he is said to have divided as we now have it, so far as the New Testament is concerned, for the convenience of public reading; as he found already

done for the Old Testament in the Hebrew and the Septuagint.

At that time also, Pope Innocent the Third in the lull of no crusade against the Saracens, was getting up a meritorious persecution to crush those noble remnants of the primitive Christianity of Gaul, the Waldenses and Albigenses : the first named from Peter Waldo their leader, chased with his followers from Lyons in 1172, the others deriving their appellation from Alby, a town in Languedoc where the lamp of true religion still flickered. These men were lovers of their Bible and its Author ; protesters against saint-worship, image-worship, Mary-worship, purgatory, transubstantiation, oral confession, and all other errors and corruptions of the Papal scheme ; and stood up manfully for a free conscience and religious toleration. It is no wonder that a haughty and ambitious Pope would desire nothing better than to turn the stream of

military adventure and superstitious cruelty towards the destruction of so pestilent a race.

Raymond the Sixth, Sovereign Count of Toulouse, stood forth with manly liberality as protector of his poor subjects the Albigeois; and their fierce scourge for many years was Simon de Montfort, a name that has come down to us detestable through seven centuries: while a very Cromwell for rigour and fanaticism, he was a second Nero for bloodthirstiness; and, wantonly cruel, anticipated every species of crime, lately reproduced by our Sepoy monsters, on the bodies of God's saints in ancient Languedoc: and, under the inspiration of another cotemporary human demon, he burnt alive thousands upon thousands.

This demon was a Spanish monk named Dominic, the severest of ascetics, out of whose tall, thin, pallid frame had been lashed and starved every kindly feeling by self-inflicted torments, and whom the equally stern Pope Inno-

cent chose as his chief tool for the extirpation of heresy. In 1204, to the misery of mankind, was erected the dread Tribunal of the Inquisition : and thenceforward hideous machines, which none but a blessed Saint Dominic could have invented, racked and tore and tortured “ the Excellent of the Earth.”

And the Pope had another ally in King Philip ; who was glad to purchase, by so pleasant a sacrifice as the extirpation of the pure and pious, the recall of an Interdict recently laid upon his people by Innocent, for the cause of their monarch (having flung aside his wife Ingeburga) living in adultery with Agnes de Meran.

Now, in Paris we may readily suppose resided several of those good folk, who held the faith of Christ in its primitive purity : and, as like is attracted by like, it is small wonder that Hal was well acquainted with Jacques Vertot and his family ; a little nest of genuine though

uncanonized saints who lived at a tumble-down abode in the Rue des Fossés: Vertot was a furrier, with a gentle wife and obedient children; but the chief adornment of that happy home was Marie his eldest daughter.

Hal's own mind had been lightened out of darkness and quickened into warmth by the converse of these good people: while his master, Stephan, also had insensibly imbibed from another similar source, the Holy Scriptures, very much of Evangelic truth, albeit, like Fénelon and Pascal afterwards, he lived and died within the pale of Rome.

And the young transcriber Edmund had not been copying Scripture for many weeks in vain: his revered master's Notes upon the Psalms, and Exercitations on Our Lord's Passion had strangely touched and interested him: and now another element came in opportunely to refine and elevate his character.

It was quite natural that Hal should find for

his son such pleasant and excellent friends as the Vertots ; they lived handy to the college, made everybody happier and better who came within their influences, and were everyway desirable : and it was still more natural that the moment Hal's unsophisticated Edmund set eyes on Marie it should be love at first sight. Never had the young man seen such beauty : for beauty is mainly of the mind and heart ; and never until he saw Marie had he looked upon a saint. There was a very halo of ecstatic happiness quietly shining round her brow, and rays of joy and peace softly lambent from her eyes : whether she was beautiful of feature or graceful in form I know not, nor did Edmund ; but she was apparelled in the beauty of holiness, and her every look and word and act combined the pensiveness of wisdom with the blessedness of love.

That with so sweet a teacher the charmed pupil by her side soon became a convert to her

creed was not only likely to happen, but did so soon enough : and it was strange to see how the highest form of human love, because mingled with heart-religion, ennobled, glorified—even beautified that once ungainly youth : he was elevated into the gentleman by being purified into the saint ; and, as to his coarse features, the same beauty shone about his brow and was lambent in his eyes as that which made the loveliness of Marie. Whatever else was wanting in that face, love and joy and peace were there to make it beautiful.

CHAPTER XII.

An Orthodox Sister : and an Orthodox Sermon.

BUT the jealous Millicent could not bear to be a patient witness of all this happiness : she was envious, miserably so, and resolved to tear down the fabric of her brother's peace and of his rising fortunes. It's true the Vertots had been civil to her,—as they were to everybody ; and Edmund was her brother,—but how could she help **that** ? Here was a great reward offered by public proclamation to any one who would denounce the enemies of Holy Church,—and she wasn't going to be the fool to refuse

five golden marks, if kings and priests were willing to give them to her. Besides, wasn't it her bounden duty (the hypocrite !) as well as her clear interest to obey her ghostly director, who in the confessional had charged her strictly to denounce heretics if she knew of any ? The same order had been systematically given throughout Paris.

Millicent brooded over the thought morosely and alone : her father had gone to England, and her brother, where was he sure to be, when not at his writing-desk ? With his sister, walking on the ramparts, or the quay, or helping her bargains in the marchés ? Not he indeed : but always with that hypocritical heretic Marie Vertot. She hated her : how easy, how pleasant it would be to bring down all her pious pride ! So Millicent brooded on it darkly.

Meanwhile, to silence evil rumours as to his orthodoxy due to our hero's Scriptural labours

and his blameless life, Monseigneur the Archbishop of Rheims preached in the new cathedral of Notre Dame before the King and his Court a famous sermon; magnificent in style, triumphant in argument, ornately poetical in language; that language to please and inform both King and People being not as usual the unintelligible Latin, but honest Norman-French, with a touch of the musical Provençal and Wallon, notes of troubadours and trouvères: and that sermon being adorned by metrical episodes, one morsel whereof I have given you in our opening chapter.

The sermon professed to be in honour of the Virgin Mary; whom Stephan (perhaps to make his praises more sincere) chose to panegyryze under the fancy-name of Alice: this was acute in many ways: first, because Philip's youngest sister, once affianced to Richard of England, and even now one of the congregation near the King of France, was named Alice: secondly,

because Philip's own mother, a princess of Champagne, also bore the name of Alice : thirdly, because (according to the punning argumentation of the times) "Allicio" in the Vulgate meaning I "entice,"—to call in a seeming Mariolatry the blessed Virgin Bele Aliz or fair enticement, would signify her drawings of the soul to holiness and heaven : and fourthly, for a reason living in St. Catherine's nunnery, which our love-martyr the eloquent Archbishop did not think it worth his while to specify particularly. And therefore did he preach at length and very ingeniously about the "cink fleurettes," and the "rose fleurie : " in fact taking for his text the battered remnant of that identical chaplet which he wore that day upon his arm under the canonicals : he did this on every great occasion, and reverently kissed it afterwards, as you have seen him, on his knees.

Millicent's confessor did his duty :—and she, (he praised her for it cordially) did her's : in the

course of the day it was tangibly worth five marks of gold to her: a mark a head for old Vertot and his wife, Marie and her eldest brother, and Edmund: it wasn't worth while, she thought, to mention the little ones; their guilt as to heresy couldn't be proved; besides, she could hardly expect a gold mark each for them. Millicent Wood went away, quite elated at her dutiful obedience and zeal for Holy Church; and fingered gladly those five pretty gold pieces,—the price of blood!

That same evening, when the Vertot family and Edmund with them were at prayers, a royal guard of Ribauds marched up the Rue des Fossés; and halted at the portal where a black bear-skin hung for a sign. Millicent's confessor (he got his fee for this, no doubt) with four black Dominicans hideously cowed and eyeholed, having demanded admittance, entered, went up stairs, and found the family actually on their knees occupied in the capital crime of

praying without a priest, caught flagrante delicto : evidence of their atrocious wickedness was here patent and avowed, if any evidence were needed : and all five were summoned to prison forthwith : the little ones, fortunately for them, having somehow gone to bed.

The five obeyed without a word, knowing it was for martyrdom : the familiars bound their elbows tightly with cords, and tied them thus trussed in a string together : and so that holy family, the victims of a jealous selfish sister and a persecuting priesthood, were escorted by that orthodox but blaspheming and obscene guard the ribald Ribauds, through the filthy streets by night to the Palais de Justice ; where they were flung together into a flooded dungeon below the level of the Seine, by way of watery contrast with their fiery trial to come on next morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Auto-da-fe.

I TREMBLE at the thought of describing such a scene: but it must be done somehow; as a true picture of the period, and to illustrate the tender mercies, the paternal gentleness of Rome towards any who presume to dissent from her despotic dictates; and to think for themselves and pray, and do good; and to live blamelessly in love towards God and man.

The morning dawned: and the rats, in that foul cavern, slunk away with darkness, ceasing to do battle for a meal. How those innocent

five, noble enviable happy, spent the night,—
five holy guardian angels in particular and the
whole company of Heaven in general knew and
rejoiced at : in the sure and steadfast hope of
immortality ; in ecstatic premonitions of the
bliss awaiting them just on the other side of that
fierce flame, so soon to be blown out, while the
reward is everlasting ; in fervent prayers for each
other, and the little ones at home, and all
friends—ay and all enemies too, even to those
wanton guards and the familiars ; in psalms and
hymns and spiritual songs, that seemed to
charm away darkness, fear, and every form of
evil ; in the happiest communion of saints, the
loving husband sure to die with his loving wife
and children dying not less happily not less
honourably with him, and as for Marie and
Edmund, rejoicing at the blessed prospect of
entering eternal bliss together in the favouring
smile of the Almighty and with the “ Well

done, good and faithful"—of the blessed Jesus Himself.

But the morning dawned; and the great sepulchral bell of Notre Dame tolled mournfully. This was the first great seizure of Protesting Heretics after the King's orders had gone forth: the criminals were notoriously blameless, respectable, excellent for character and charities; moreover, one was a copyist in the questionable Archbishop's bookery,—and another a very pretty girl;—to say less of a venerable father, an invalid mother, and a brother of whom no one knew any harm: never was there such a gang to be made a severe example of, to the glory of Dominic and Innocent and Rome and Philip of France.

Their doom had been fixed the night before: all to be burnt alive together in the open space before the Hôtel de Ville. The spectacle would be honoured by the presence of King Philip

Augustus in person, and all the magnates of the capital.

An immense crowd had gathered before the Town Hall long before the appointed hour, and thronged all the avenues leading to the place of execution. No sort of trial had taken place: all was assumed, or to the ecclesiastical conscience proved: the criminals had positively been caught in the act of prayer without a priest, and there was an end of the matter they must be burnt alive for such a crime, as a simple anticipation of hell-fire. Anyhow, the wretches were guilty of holiness: and tens of thousands have died at Rome's command by the most cruel of deaths for no worse crime.

Among that dense crowd, one person had gone thither earliest, and so was in the first row behind the soldiers and closest to the vast pile of faggotting. It was Millicent Wood; none but her confessor, and herself, and God above,—and haply weeping angels and exulting

devils,—knew that it was by her treachery alone these innocents were now about to die. But she knew it; she was speedily come to be a self-convicted Judas; she abhorred herself,—and as for those five gold marks, she had flung them into the Seine with the bitterest remorse as she crossed the little Châtelet early that morning to get near the pile: she hated herself,—and loathed her ghostly director who had wormed it all out of her,—and she longed to go and perish anywhere out of the world, like Judas.

And now the time approached: that bell tolled quicker: a mixed procession of loose soldiery and cowed friars came and roused the martyrs from their reveries of bliss, and hurried them to the Grand Square: his Highness the King might possibly get there first, and imagine the treason of keeping him waiting.

Quietly, courageously, nay happily walked on

that holy family : and the populace hooted, and the attendant soldiery were lewd and brutal, and earth and hell seemed all let loose against them ; but Heaven shone upon them smilingly from above, and there was peace within, and all was well. Who could not, who does not envy those martyrs marching on to Victory and everlasting life ?

There was a terrible hooting and howling against them when they appeared in the great square before the Town Hall : for the King and Court had just come, occupying the tapestried balcony over the grand entrance ; and it was clearly ill-breeding to have kept his Highness even a moment waiting for the sport : those detestable heretics !

They were marched up to the royal box ; just like race-horses at Ascot : then marched round the pyre, to please the people, who criticized their points much as the racing folks are wont to do : “ Look at that old fat fellow, how

he will burn !”—“ here’s a comely lass for you, well, her smock won’t cover her long, that’s one comfort !”—“ bless us, they must chain those stout young fellows well to the post, or they’ll break away !” and as for poor Madame Vertot, they laughed at her loudly for her limping. Nevertheless, all those names were written in Heaven’s Book of Life ; and King Philip, luxuriously looking on (he was eating an early melon) might well have thought himself happy to exchange circumstances with Madame Vertot : yes, and many of those gay court ladies too, chatting with their gallants, and eager for the spectacle.

The parade ceased : there was a flourish of trumpets, and the sports were going to begin in earnest.

Five Dominican friars, in long black robes cowed and eye-holed came forward, each leading one of those dreadful culprits and holding a crucifix before him : very gently (such are the

tender mercies of the wicked) did those reverend personages lead the detestables to the stakes : there were five set up in a quincunx ; a whole stack of faggotting being heaped all round it : and an executioner's man at each stake, not without kicks and oaths, chained those prisoners to the upright posts.

A priest, it was Millicent's confessor (she recognized him) with the jaunty air of one who has done an acceptable service, advanced and bowed before the King ; and received from his most Christian Highness a lighted torch, first handed to the King by a familiar : the Dominicans truly call themselves ' *Canes Domini* ' setting the world on fire : for "outside are dogs," and "it is set on fire of hell."

The smirking priest, who felt it his day of triumph indeed as basking publicly in royal favour, handed the torch to the captain of the Ribauds, officially chief executioner : who (*Circumlocution* being manifest even there) handed

it to a gilded deputy ; who in his dignified turn handed it to the vulgar fellows who really did the business : and these ran from one to another, setting the whole heap in a blaze.

At once,—and as if by inspiration, as if Heaven had been opened and the whole angelic quire suddenly heard,—from the midst of those fierce flames, consuming indeed the bodies terribly but unable to consume the souls, arose a sweet melody, calm musical ecstatic, for they sang together in parts as they had been wont to do,

“ Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever !”

Could they be in agonies ? Had not God’s angels helped them, even as in the case of Azarias, Ananias, and Misael ?

And again, snatches of ejaculatory prayer and praise rose ever and anon from the thick black

smoke above the crackling of the faggots and the stifled human groans and moans forced from those blest martyrs,—and one voice—it was that of Jacques Vertot the father shouted exultingly from that fiery furnace,

“Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory!”

And then another voice, a youth’s, seemed to demand in a paroxysm of pain

“How long, O Lord, holy and good, wilt Thou not avenge our blood?”

And then another, a woman’s, sweet and shrill, as of a soul flying heavenward in agonizing joy, sounded clearly among all the riot,

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

Then, two of those half-naked executioners, who with busy zeal (seemingly cruel but really

humane) had been heaping green wood high about the victims to suffocate them with the smoke and make them senseless,—upon this burst into audible sobs. Their chief noticed the weakness, and it will surprize nobody to hear that a year afterwards they also nobly suffered martyrdom as so-called Albigeois. The prayer of Marie was heard for them, as the Protomartyr's was for Paul.

But, O King Philip Augustus, O profligate Court and nobles, O base people crowding to this holy martyrdom as if it was a bull-fight, O priests friars and monks, hell's own children all, destined if only by the Nemesis of this day's work to burn there unhelped in everlasting torments, O thou chiefest caitiff, Millicent Wood,—

I thought of her, because I seemed to see her on that instant. A frantic woman, apparently disguised, rushed out of the crowd, breaking through the guard, and flung herself on the

heap of burning faggots : she ran up them determinately, and clung to one of the chained youths, who roasting as he was bent his head to kiss her : she clung to him, and both burned together as they stood : but he only moaned the end of that sweet psalm "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,"—while she, burning as she voluntarily clung there, screamed and howled horribly like a tortured jackal !

"If I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

The shrieks of Millicent Wood, a suicidal penitent too late like Judas, broke up that pleasant spectacle : for his most Christian Highness began to dislike the stench as over-savoury ; and he and his Court had finished all their Fontaine-de-belle-eau grapes and melons ; and the best of the show was over, and really that stench of burnt flesh was unbearable any longer ; their pouncet-boxes were quite useless. So his

most Christian Highness bowed courteously to the chief Dominican, a truculent-looking and dirty friar, tonsured, bare-footed, and black-cassocked ; and with a flourish of trumpets, the royal train retired.

The martyrs had all entered into rest ! and were now in the heavenly Jerusalem, with an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and with Jesus their Beloved who had rejoiced over them with joy, as the bridegroom over his bride, owning them as His before the angels of God ; so that Heaven rang thrillingly with even more than its supernal choirs of joy as each of those blessed ones from his chariot of fire entered into the world of glory.

As for the ferocious crowd, the greater part had eagerly gloated on that spectacle : but some few, and they could not get away for the crush, overcome by pity or possibly sympathizing in faith, loudly encouraged the martyrs, some

praying for them openly: and several of those officious black Dominicans prying about them from the wide circle kept by the Ribauds with their maces and the King's halberdiers, noted them in their tablets, questioning the folks around them of their names and whereabouts: and ensuring for the morrow a similar exhibition of scarlet Rome drinking herself drunken with the blood of saints.

CHAPTER XIV.

About Angelique's and Simon's antecedents.

STEPHAN LANGTON, though armoured in Archiepiscopal dignity and supposed from his office to be at least an acquiescent in the matter, was more than shocked when he heard of all this horror. Till it was over he had known nothing of it: confessors are secret, Philip was anxious for an instant sacrifice in proof of his zeal for Rome, and the thing was begun and finished offhand without any intermediate delays: for, after that order given overnight, it was clear that some victim or other would be

found next morning at the Hôtel de Ville ready to be offered: stakes and faggotting are soon extemporized: so both court and people made its preparations rapidly.

But this new phase of character in Philip, and his own dangerous position as a suspected prelate, resolved our hero as to his next move in life: he must leave France,—at first however only Paris,—just to have time to communicate with the now absent Hal, and to make other arrangements: it was his wisdom to retire to Rheims, as in fact he had often been urged to do by his canons and clergy. Accordingly, with much acknowledgement to the king (whose appreciation of that sermon to the glory of Alice was still intense) he resigned the Chancellorship of Paris, to the great satisfaction of his Highness as a matter of patronage: for the King forthwith gave it to one out of sixty applicants; thereby making fifty-nine mortal enemies and one ungrateful friend.

Just as the Archbishop, with his multitudinous train of acolytes copyists cooks servitors and other domestics and officials around some five-score packhorses and mules, was entering his litter for Rheims, a halt was suddenly called, so far as Monseigneur and his immediate attendants were concerned: but the cavalcade of luggage beasts and sumpters passed on; it would be easy to overtake them on the route. And the cause was this; a sufficient one; the unexpected arrival of old Hal. Langton instantly had him in for a private audience; but was unpleasantly and beyond measure astounded to find him accompanied by Angélique—he could not be mistaken—in the masculine and only too attractive disguise of a young gentleman of quality! What a dilemma at this crisis.

Now, as poor old Hal has yet heard nothing of his dire domestic calamity, and as the Archbishop has plenty of documents to read (not excepting one from Alice) it may be as well to

put you in possession of the facts whereby the unexpected, not to say unwelcome presence of Angélique (in a man's dress too, so scandalous if discovered) at this moment came about.

The first novelty over, our fair Parisienne soon found out that a dull Surrey nunnery was not at all the place for her. Accustomed from birth to the bustle of a crowded city,—her mother had been a court-sempstress in the Rue St. Jacques, and as for her father unknown he was supposed to have been a certain dissolute nobleman,—she could not bear the burden of a quiet country life among grave unsocial women, few of whom could speak one word of bad French, while for her part she could not muster even that amount or that quality of English. Hal, be it remembered, had become a fair linguist, barring the pronunciation; and Alice from her official dignity as an Abbess mingling with the Norman baronial circle had necessarily made herself acquainted with the language;

but otherwise poor Angélique felt a stranger in a strange land, cut off from the chief solace of existence, conversation. Then again, she was longing night and day to see Simon once more : or if not him, at all events his nearer brother Stephan, so like him, so kind, so sympathizing : she thought of nothing else, even in that pretty gothic chapel with all the nuns intoning round her. Angélique had not taken the veil as an outward professor of religion ; nor, to confess truth, had she inwardly derived much consolation from the pious precepts and gentle self-denials of Alice : unrequited love, absent lovers, choice morsels read to her out of certain letters in that padlocked casket, the mutual excellences of the two monastic brothers so cruelly divorced from these their loving but unmated wives,—those were the only topics that could soothe Angélique's restlessness, or induce her to bear with patience the dreary solitude and perpetual drony services of St. Catherine's. The active

duties of a charitable sister among the poor and sick being cut away from her through lack of language, the relaxation of neighbouring intercourse being equally denied her, and the daily excitement of local news nothing and less than nothing to the alien dropped into Surrey as from some other sphere, really there was left to the poor girl only to brood secretly over her sorrows and desires, until they grew morbid and intolerable: nothing but the wish to escape from this dull nunnery possessed her, and the hope of seeing brother Stephan once again in lively Paris—perhaps (even more distracting thought) of getting somehow to Simon at Rome.

Their acquaintance had been of the shortest but the sweetest: and it is time here by a word or two to tell you what I know of Simon Langton. This younger brother by one year of our nobler hero Stephan, (the pair so nearly of a size as to have been usually taken for twins, and who grew up more alike than the two

Dromios) has been lost to our sight as to Stephan's for well nigh thirty years ; since we left him as a little orphan eight years old at the Lonesome-Vale farm in the hamlet of Friga-Street next Leith Hill.

His career I cannot enter upon at any length, as an episode injurious to the continuity of this tale ; but its chief outlines are these. When the crusading Knight of Wodetone, stalwarth Sir Ralph, carried off our hero's father Hugh and half the young blood of the parish to the East with him, there remained to take charge of the old manor house and park a widowed sister of Sir Ralph, the Lady Clare, with her two little children, one the present heir and nephew Sir Reginald, the other a daughter Amalie. Of her charity the Lady Clare took in the hapless little Simon as a playmate for her boy ; and for several years (in fact all the while Stephan was at Tamar Monachorum and for half the time of his sojourn in Lincolnshire) he

was brought up with Reginald on equal terms, enjoying as his home the rambling old mansion and all its pleasant belongings. The grave beech woods with their subjungle of ashes and hollies; the deer-leap with its mottled antlered herds; the three convergent vallies meeting at the Great House, and each traversed down the middle of their grassy slopes by what were then rapid rivulets banked up at intervals for the frequent waterfall and full of trout; these had plenty of charms for Master Simon and Reginald his bosom friend: they hunted, fished and cross-bowed together, ate from one trencher, slept on one huge old oaken couch: item, though there was somewhat less of this, the good parish parson after Stephan's speedy departure was engaged to teach the boys languages and boke-lore, and with his truant scholars probably did the best he could.

But there was another (and this time a very charming) tutor, trying in vain to teach the

unconscious Simon something else too : for Amalie's eyes spoke the language of love so clearly to him, that I marvel how it was the lad never heard nor saw it : the young Adonis, ever eager for the chase, took no notice of anything beside ; he and his friend Reggy thought exactly the same of sister Amy : she luted prettily enough in wet weather,—the poor girl's very heart was in those notes ; she trimmed his arrows tidily, and was so good-natured as to be always ready to do anything for him,—ay, young Simon, thou mightest have tried her even unto death ; she was a beauty too, (and the two friends began to take heed of beauty in every other direction) but she did mope so and seemed so miserable : what can be the matter with Amy, brother Reggy ?

Her mother began to see it in her bright eye, quick pulse, fading roses ;—she was verily dying for love : and, when it was now too late, for the arrow had shot home into her heart, the

cautious Lady Clare sent her son with his good-looking friend (a daring dashing lad, dark, open-browed, manly and well-limbed, with whom Reggy was as much a contrast as Robert was with Faulconbridge)—she sent them, I say, discreetly away to some friends in Normandy. Off set the youths gladly enough, and eager for adventure; but they left behind them with a bare ‘good-bye, dear sister’ and a cold brotherly kiss,—a broken heart!

She pined, and pined away alone: Simon never knew of it, and if he had, wouldn’t have guessed the cause: they did indeed hear that Amalie had caught a chill and ailed sadly; and another messenger to Castle Galliard told them, hurriedly coming one day, that if Master Reginald wished to see his sister alive, he must return with him hotfoot: Simon was coming too of course, but a missive from the Lady of Wodetone bade him stay behind,—for no reason at all that he could see: however, he had his

own plans and pleasures and friends where he was, and though he would have liked to have seen poor Amy's face once more, still—if he wasn't wanted!—and the proud islander's, the independent Englishman's, feeling prevailed: Reginald should kiss sister Amy for him. So Reginald departed alone.

Ah! mother,—had that youth so well-beloved been only asked to come back, his presence would have been a sunbeam from Heaven itself upon that languid couch,—nay, might even have brought up again the dying from her death-bed; but, cruel pride prevailed even over motherly love, and rather than see her high-born daughter wed a yeoman's son, the inexorable Lady Clare deliberately closed the lifeless lids over that daughter's glazing eyes: only for a moment had the poor girl sparkled up, with a rush of rose to her cheek, and a note of joy upon her tongue; it was when Reginald kissed her heartily for Simon.

Meanwhile, in far off Normandy, the paternal love of adventure broke out strongly in Master Simon. There was then getting up in France what is called the Child's Crusade; the maddest expedition ever devised by poor excitable humanity. A lad of Picardy, enthusiastic or fanatical, (for children seldom are impostors) imagined that he had been commissioned from on High to redeem the Holy Sepulchre; and the revelation to him ran that it could only be accomplished by the pure hands of youths and maidens. Really, it seemed as if the vial of God's wrath for the corruptions of Christendom must now be poured out over the mass of its comparative innocence: the manly but dissolute strength of Europe had been drained in those desolating wars,—the sole result of which had been the recovery of two cross-sticks of idolized old timber, since retaken and destroyed (except Hugh's morsel) at the battle of Tiberias: and here now the Christened Children were to be

decimated wholesale. Thousands flocked to the banner of this brave boy of Picardy ; he paraded the several baronies of France in a gilt car, surmounted by a blood-red cross ; everywhere parents gave up their children to him, fascinated by this angel-form of the Moloch of War : and (the ultimate issue may as well be stated shortly at once) many thousands of boys and girls, youths and maidens, the female part in male crusading garb, set sail for Marseilles ; and soon after, with some rare exceptions who clung to the wrecked vessels, all perished in the waves of a Mediterranean tornado.

Simon had been one of the wildest promoters of this precious expedition ; for, though older and manlier than most of his crusading companions, he still came well under the inspired category of virgin-saints described in Revelations XIV., 4, "who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." So Simon entered into it with heart and soul. A less guilty

sacrifice than that myriad of pure children was never offered by the folly of mankind to the demon of destruction: but Providence saw not fit to prevent it; or if in mercy the Great Ruler interposed to hinder a more cruel slaughter of such innocents by the Saracenic scimeter or the Galilean pestilence, they must still be thus all drowned together, shouting war-cries of deliverance for the Holy Sepulchre.

But Simon, a sturdy swimmer, got to shore on the coast of Morocco: and after three years of terrible slavery there, managed to escape to Ceuta, and thence by boat to Gibraltar: whence, in a weary length of travel through Spain and France, he had gradually wandered and begged and fought his way homewards as far as Paris, two years before our Stephan went there. His adventures, as also those of his father, would be volumes of themselves: but we cannot break away so tediously from our

special thesis. To be quick then, and finish this needful episode.

A survivor from that disastrous Child's Crusade, which had brought sorrow to the hearts of so many fathers and mothers, would of course be overwhelmed with the warmest Parisian friendships, directly he made known the story of his life. As home direct was less his errand than a livelihood anywhere (for, by death or absence all dispersed, he had no near relative) we may readily understand that he was glad of the chance of enrollment in the King's guard: and if he for sundry decorative braidings found out the gay coutumière of the Rue St. Jacques, it is small wonder; still less that he fell in love with her pretty daughter, Angélique. How the fever came—and the impetuous soldier became all at once as rash a monk, we have heard from herself: as also that he is now at papal head-quarters in Rome.

CHAPTER XV.

Escape : Disguise : Hal's Martyrs.

ANGELIQUE, then, felt the nunnery her prison, and was always scheming and dreaming of escape. But how forlorn the hope was: how could a girl and a foreigner thread the long infested wilderness from Gilford to the coast? and how could she get away for even a mile of it from all these prying sisters, who so kindly so unslumberingly watched her? Sometimes, she resolved openly to ask the gentle abbess; but this wouldn't do; for that Alice was devoted to Stephan's lightest word or wish

she knew, and Stephan's self had sent her hither: sometimes she would have taken a wandering beggar or outlaw into her confidence, but (fortunately for her) she found all such caitiffs totally ignorant of French; as to running away alone, it could only be to certain death: her coming hither with Hal proved that; never was there such a pestilential marsh, full of evil beasts evil men and all other evil perils, as John's misrule had made of universal England, even to its garden, Surrey.

Just as she was dropping into a gloomy and silent despair—Alice often tried to comfort her by talking of her own similar sorrows, but she only added fuel to flame—the arrival of old Hal one rainy morning gave her a most obvious hope. So then, while he was closeted with Alice, waiting till she had read and answered her accustomed letter, Angélique quietly took down from a peg in the entrance hall a red cloak belonging to a casual applicant, leaving on

the peg her own better grey one in exchange ; and ran out into the rain. If anybody in St. Catherine's saw her, it was small wonder that the red-caped woman ran ; it poured so : and Angélique well remembered the way by which Hal had brought her ; so she went to the ferry, and stopped there, knowing he was sure to come that way. When Hal, returning, first saw and recognized her, he was in a sore strait ; for he wished, honest fellow, always to do the right thing, (a difficult matter) towards everybody : she came to him, and in a language he could intimately understand, though indifferent as to speaking it, she pathetically told him all her trouble, her longing to get to Paris again, her misery in that nunnery, her wish to return to the Archbishop : manifestly it was needless to confess her other class of feelings to any man.

Hal put on his considering cap and soon resolved : he would take her back to his master,

as a poor foreigner, isolated and manifestly wretched. So he said,

“Come then with me to Aldeburie, demoiselle: and I must fit thee with better garments for travel in these dangerous times than a woman’s.”

They went to the Great House, and saw Hal’s three children there. Now, one of Hal’s sons had lately become the fortunate possessor of a suit of clothes which the juvenile Braiose had out-grown: a good suit enough, but too small for the owner, who like Otranto was now too long and too broad for his vestures. Into this suit crept our escaping Parisienne: and really, when she emerged from that chamber in close-fitting leggings with buff boots and a violet-coloured tunic, not without cap and feather too and a cape to match, Angélique was a very fascinating young fellow.

I pretermit the whole journey.

No wonder then that the retreating Arch-

bishop looked on her as a dangerous visitor. Here was a dilemma: what was to be done?

Well:—the first thing manifestly was to tell poor old Hal of his new calamity. Stephan did it kindly.

“Hal, dear friend, dost thou remember the Silent Pool?”

“Nay, Master mine, can I forget it? but why speak of it?”

“Hal,—those dear ones are in Heaven: hast thou heard of the good Vertots?”

“Nothing; what of them,—what has happened,—are they gone away?”

“To Heaven, with those dear ones. King Philip and the Inquisitors have had a Moloch sacrifice: thy friends went to glory in chariots of fire.”

“And God be praised for the good martyrs! yet I loved them, and—”

“‘As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt offering;’ so

saith Wisdom; and good Edmund also is of that holy army: Hal, thy son is happy now with God."

Hal's lip quivered, and his eye moistened,—
"How sayest thou—my Master?—And Millicent?"

"With Him also!"—Hal fainted on the floor.

It is a mercy to many that Millicent was thought to owe her dreadful death entirely to a sister's deep affection: possibly indeed it might be that she did: but at all events, none among men but her confessor and you and I know of the terrible chief cause, her close imitation of Judas.

CHAPTER XVI.

How to deal with a Dilemma, and how to please a Pope.

HAL soon recovered, and was comforted : there was hope, nay triumph in their end : and he was a wise, welltried man ; and when a thing is past help, comfort is all the more accessible, especially to an honest man and a Christian.

And now at last Archbishop Stephan turns to that comely youngster Angélique.

“ Daughter, I have many cares and some sorrows,—forgive my seeming negligence : and

as the mules are waiting, tell me shortly why art thou here, and thus habited ?”

He did not dare to trust himself with much parleying ; and scarcely to look at her.

“ My father, nay it is my brother, I was miserable all alone, and I escaped, and good Hal hath helped me back to thee : do not deny me, Stephan.”

A strange conflict was going on in Langton’s spirit : here in all outward likeness of loveliness was his own Alice, even as his heart of hearts remembered her a score of years ago ; here she was, garbed bewitchingly, and talking to him in her own sweet tones. The poor Archbishop trembled at that beauteous vision : but his calm bearing revealed nothing ; and there is an immediate obvious resource, travel.

“ Come with us to Rheims then : I am bound thither instantly : Angélique, I give thee brotherly welcome, and thou shalt be of my personal train : but I would gladly have seen

thee in thine own attire: just now, as all my people are gone out of the palace, a change is impossible; but I do exhort thee be discreet. Evil tongues might otherwise do discredit to mine office."

"Trust me, brother Stephan, trust me: I will ride among thy scholars."

He looked at those blue eyes, that golden hair, the same sweet sunny face of his dear morning recollections: and there too was the graceful form too visible, no scholarly youth's but a maiden's. As Alice's lover, and the Archbishop of Rheims, the dilemma was a trying one: but the true gold of Stephan's character was only the more purified by every trial.

They all went on their journey: duly arrived, refreshed, and made themselves at home like sensible travellers.

On the way, a great thought had come to Stephan's help. Rome was his object now,—

for sake of England whom Innocent alone could help, as the Bad King's great antagonist;—for sake also of his brother Simon, whom he longed to see;—for sake of this poor lovestricken Angélique too,—(he had conversed with that new scholar several times upon the way, and had become convinced that Rome with Simon was her best refuge;) for sake also of his own peace of mind, distracted by her presence, as well as of his own personal safety—Philip's friendship growing manifestly cold, and Dominic's satellites suspecting him of heresy.

And then how best to make himself acceptable to Innocent? It is true, his writings were well known,—his university lectures, his pulpit eloquence, his powerful antagonism heading up the People's forces against England's wicked King, his own favour with Philip and consequent advancement, all these were advantages enough to recommend him. But Stephan wisely considered that in approaching a new

potentate you must be particular in your merits as well as general; it is no compliment to come before him introduced specially no otherwise than as to the rest of the world. So Stephan bethought him of another of his paternal relics, a fifth morsel of the true Cross: yes, this indeed in its sealed vellum enclosed within a jewelled crystal casket, was a bribe that well might buy a Pope to help poor England. Further, in the train of this embassy, the distracting presence of Angélique might cleverly be got rid of: if you physically cannot flee from a temptation, the next best thing to do is to induce it to fly from you. Yet more, to propitiate and that in a certain way the most ambitious Pope that ever wore tiara, and to free himself openly from the fetters of Philip and his French archbishopric, Stephan resolved to lay his mitre at Innocent's feet, and crave refuge of his Holiness as a simple monk at Viterbo: he would not go to Rome until Simon had

somehow found a home for Angélique. Altogether, the plan had many points of wisdom. Stephan had long been loudly called upon by his oppressed countrymen, to urge their sad case upon some continental ally to help them: and no one had any power in Europe but the Pope.

Perhaps of all the various men of mighty name who have filled St. Peter's chair, no one of them has better attained to the great ideal of the Pontifex Maximus than Innocent the Third. Born of the princely house of Conti,—so named from having been Counts of Segna and Sora from time immemorial,—of that illustrious house which has contributed no less than nine Popes and thirteen Cardinals to the Roman Church, Lothario was an hereditary magnate: in morals blameless, in learning profound, gentle in manner but inflexible of purpose, humble but firmly believing that the Pope is God on earth, so ascetic in himself as to have

written when a mere youth a treatise on "Contempt of the World, and the Misery of Man's life," yet as magnificent in liberalities and charities as the St. Carlo of later times with his splendid "Humilitas" and all, he seemed to combine every sort of qualification for his high office. At twenty-nine he was a Cardinal;—and on the death of his uncle Clement the Third (whose title as Cardinal had been, I speak it seriously, St. Bacchus!) he was unanimously elected Pope though only thirty-seven; and (we are told) was hailed 'Innocent' by the conclave on account of his purity of life and conversation.

But this gentle good man was altogether a different personage when he put on the tiara and the Fisherman's ring. Not his great precursor Gregory the Seventh, nor his arrogant imitator Boniface the Eighth did more for the aggrandizement of the Papal See than the third Innocent: Hildebrand and Benedetto with all

their daring exploits must bow before the genius of Lothaire. Germany meekly received from him the Emperor of his will, afterwards excommunicated for asserting his own : Philip Augustus quailed and knelt beneath his interdict : the Kings of Portugal, Sicily, and Leon did meekly as he bade them for fear of the Papal curse and to buy his blessing ; and we well know how he set his foot upon the neck of John. He threw down or built up kingdoms just as he pleased ; commanded crusades, and the flood of men and treasure flowed as he directed, now to the east, now to the western Albigeois, now to northern England ; set up the Inquisition, a horrible watcher at every man's hearth ; and invented or encouraged, as armies of militia conquering everywhere for Rome, the begging friars of Francis and the persecuting monks of Dominic. To such a pontiff we may well believe no homage could be so grateful as the surrender of a foreign archbishopric ; to

such a man no relic so precious as a morsel of the one True Cross.

Langton therefore acted wisely in this that he did with all good speed. By a canon of his cathedral at Rheims he sent a sealed resignation of the archbishopric, to be reconferred by the Pope on whom he would; by another canon in company he transmitted to his Holiness the inestimable relic in its crystal casket: and among the train of followers old and young he easily found a place for the angelical young gentleman (for the nonce one Alphonse Fleury to wit) who bore a letter from the Archbishop to his brother at Rome. Soon after, Stephan set off privately for Viterbo.

CHAPTER XVII.

Keygate Tabern.

BUT what brought Hal back so much sooner than usual? When a man with sundry helpers has to keep up the correspondence of a great confederacy (for the Barons were confederated patriots not conspiring traitors) and to leave messages of grave import, often verbally, from castle to castle over half broad England, he must needs have time allowed him. But here he is returned with magical speed: why so soon? and how could he have managed it so well too? For with such a faithful Mercury as

Hal, speed implied a thing well done as sure as quickly.

The answer is strange, but comprehensible: he had accidentally lighted upon all the friends of liberty assembled together in one place for conference.

On his regular way from Dover to St. Catherine's, Hal must always go through Reygate, then a smart little town under the protection of Henry Plantaganet sixth Earl of Warrene and Surrey. The Earl was one of those well-meaning but narrow-minded subjects in whose eyes a King can do no wrong: and thus for years of sadness and constrained but conscientious obedience he and the good Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury and some others of their quality stood with John whatever his madness chose to do, so strengthening him in his wickedness: the only unintended gain being that Reygate and its castle were spared by the fierce mercenary army, when most other baronial resi-

dences were demolished. But now the crisis seemed to have come; the mad King must be checked in his career somehow: everywhere the land was desolate, towns burnt, the poor inhabitants massacred, and a general famine imminent; for none dared till the soil, barter was at an end, everything at a standstill; while John had utterly destroyed the castles and laid waste the demesnes of many refractory barons, who if they managed to escape themselves, suffered terribly in the persons of wives and daughters, openly made victims to the tyrant in his brutal cruelty. Then, as for the poor man's lot, John's last exaggeration of the Forest Laws had made it miserable indeed: the starving serf might of common right hitherto have satisfied his hunger upon ducks or quails or any other birds his bolts could reach; conies also had always been his for the catching, and a wild hog or any other sort of wild cattle not specified as of venery. But now the basely selfish mandate

had gone forth that "all wild feathered fowl" were to be accounted game, and that all beasts not domestic were included as of venery: whereby it came to pass that, in a time when the markets were shut for lack of buyers and sellers and produce, and when the only safe places where merchants might meet for their bargaining were church-yards and other sites of sanctuary, no man could, though it were to save his family from starvation, shoot or snare one among the million of wild fowl thronging the great marshes and hernaries all over the kingdom, without peril of impalement. Worse even still; for the wicked King had actually commanded all hedges to be burnt and all ditches to be filled throughout the wretched land, in order that his deer might fatten on the poor people's corn and his royal chase find no impediments!

Even Warrene and Pembroke kicked at such tyranny as this; even they at last secretly joined

the confederation : and the baronial meetings were henceforth to be held now in Earl Warrene's Castle at Reygate, as the least likely place to be suspected of the King.

Reygate Castle in those far-off days was a strong Saxon fortress ; and it remained a respectable edifice, though altered and remodelled from its ancient phase, until deep in the seventeenth century : when the jealousy of Parliament commanded its entire demolition, not one stone now remaining to mark its site. But, strange to say, notwithstanding this, the Baron's meeting-hall is still in existence ; for it is a vast troglodytic cavern, analogous to those at Gilford already mentioned,—and to others still to be seen at Betchworth and the Deepdene and even undermining Dorking town. We shall enter the cavern ourselves ere long.

Well : Hal, as I said, was journeying through Reygate, and thought there must be a market

there for the throng: so he asked a country wife what it might mean.

“Save thee, Sir,—to-day my Lord has all his friends about him in the Castle, and they do say,—but o’ which part be thou, for king or people?”

“If the king were a king, for both; but, if he be a tyrant, a murderer, and a robber—”

“Enough said, and God be with thee, Sir: go in there under the round portal, and say ‘Fitz-Walter’ if the porter stops thee.”

Hal saw it all at a glance: and thanked Heaven for good guidance. He went under the round portal, whispered the password,—and followed through the first court; thence through the inner ceinture to the second court; in the middle whereof, square and solid, stood the Castle-keep. There, with a string of other folk as all along, habited like himself as travellers and in disguise, and (albeit many of them magnates) with no baronial pomp nor circum-

stance, he entered a low-browed arch,—and by a sliding-door at side out of the gallery immediately found himself in a small chamber. The middle of its floor was open ; an irregular-shaped trap-door having been lifted off and leant against the wall : and a smoky light streamed up from the opening.

Following on in his turn, Hal spoke to an official, stationed to examine each as he entered : it would have been certain and sudden death to any spy or John's-man who might dare to come so far. But Hal had proofs of loyalty to the People's cause positive and most welcome ; to wit, his wallet full of letters from Stephan Langton. So, gratefully and gladly was he bade to go down.

First, some twenty steps cut in the sand-rock, then for 200 feet a narrow sloping gallery, till the plumb-depth might be 50 feet perpendicular from the surface, led to a large excavation 125 feet long, 14 wide, and 12 high ;

it was rudely shaped into the semblance of an arched roof, and at one side had a similar offset cavern 50 feet long, with stone seats ranged laterally and at the end. The gallery and caverns were set thick with torches which blazed and smoked prodigiously : quite a dense cloud hung along the crown of the roof.

A great crowd hot and noisy filled the larger cavern : all were patriots there ; but the notables among them lined the stone seats of the smaller one : and as Hal's embassy lay especially with these, by help of Fitz-Walter's chief esquire, he was led up the middle between those thronged seats.

It was no scene of feudal grandeur that—no armour, no pennons, nothing of the picturesque in chivalry : all seemed simple burgesses, or way-worn travellers, now and then a scalloped pilgrim for safer disguise, or a forester, or field serf, or halberdier, or what not.

But hearts beat higher there and truer than

ever beat at common joust or tournament: and lips quivered, and pulses throbbed, and cheeks blanched, as they spoke one to another of their own hideous wrongs and of the sad estate of England. John the detested, John the accursed, was the centre spot of hate to all that angry cavern; and they took counsel of each other how to rid the realm of such a monster.

However, all was then mere clamour, unorganized indignation and aimless vengeance: who would bell the cat? They wanted a wise head, a leader; they had asked aloud for "Stephan Langton!" he was not here personally indeed at this their initiatory meeting; but by a happy chance his well-known faithful messenger had just found them out, and here he was with a wallet full of letters.

Stephan exhorted unity, secrecy, and (till the time for action fully came) long-enduring patience: and he promised to be soon with

them : for he was now on his way to Pope Innocent, if haply the Head of the Church would help in their extremity an outraged Christian People, cruelly oppressed by their own mad King.

As I said, that meeting was merely an initiatory one, and in itself produced no immediate results beyond the encouragement of one another in the good and necessary work, England's rescue and salvation. The heat too was suffocating, and they soon broke up for want of very air. But all this true incident of our tale and county explains Hal's speedier return,—which was what we professed to have to account for : and there will be plenty of time and space anon for politics and patriotism.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Miracle: and its Exposition.

AND what a clatter there was in St. Catherine's Nunnery when Angélique was nowhere to be found ! What on earth could have become of her ? Whither had the girl been spirited away ? She had not spoken to a soul about leaving, seemed a favourite with the Abbess and often closeted with her, was quiet, mild and mopey, and couldn't get away if she would : a forty-female power of curiosity and watchfulness had been constantly directed towards that mysterious Frenchwoman ; and how

could she have escaped their vigilance? It was clearly impossible.

Was she then a witch, able by some drug or anointing oils, or repeating Pater Nosters backwards to make herself invisible? this was far from an unlikelihood, according to the light of those days; or had anybody made away with her, and buried her in the garden? horrid thought!—never were there such cowards as a houseful of nuns; or was she spring-locked into some chest?—yet every corner of the premises had been ransacked; or, likeliest suggestion of all, was that blessed morsel of the True Cross at last asserting itself by working the miracle of invisibility on one of the favoured sisterhood, just as (now they came to think of it) it had already worked the unappreciated wonder of similarity between Angélique and their beautiful Abbess?

Alice, with a heart for love and lovers, and a shrewd remembrance of the simultaneous de-

parture of Hal and the disappearance of that red cloak, guessed the truth ; but in common charity and discretion could say nothing about it ; whatever she might think, her tongue was tied from speaking ; and after strict examination of all the premises and its out-houses buildings fields and woods, and the conviction that Angélique really was gone and that no cruel accident had happened to her or anyone else on the spot, the Lady Abbess seemed rather by her silence to incline to the last wise suggestion, a miracle ; waiting to be sure of the truth at Hal's next visit. Meanwhile, to Alice's dismay, as being naturally too honest to promote imposture, those gossiping forty females chattered their nunnery into such exalted repute through this True Cross miracle, that all comers and goers on the Pilgrim's way stopped to worship the relic at the little Gothic chapel on that outlying hill-top, and began to make St. Catherine's wealthy and famous.

We who are always well up to truths and never tolerate long the weakness of a mystery can well afford to scorn such abject superstition, and not altogether to approve of any partial connivance with it : but Alice, let us remember, dared not suggest her likelier guess (after all it was no more) for Hal's sake, for Stephan's, and her own : even as to herself only,—the forty sisters would have baited her to death about that always unpopular because favoured stranger, and the whole neighbourhood would have risen up as one man to expel such an Abbess from the nunnery ; she would certainly have been held as an accomplice in the novice's escape, an unfaithful steward, a winking guardian. Alice therefore wisely held her peace : and if the miraculous legend daily grew clearer and stronger, she could not help nor hinder it.

But by this time, Angélique is at Rome, longing yet dreading to meet Simon.

The embassy had sped well : Innocent in

open conclave with his cardinals had accepted with manifest satisfaction the surrender of Stephan's Archiepiscopate; and in another audience of the Vatican had quite joyfully torn open that sealed treasure, the inestimable relic. It has since become the centre of a splendid diamond cross that blazes on the breast of successive Popes as an heir-loom and chief jewel of the Papacy; but none of them has so idolatrously worshipped it as first did Innocent. Stephan's name and influence rose comparatively: and the Pope was at a loss to know how best he could requite a man, a famous man too and an admirable, who had conferred on him such lasting obligations.

But meanwhile for Angélique and Simon: it was a notable interview. Simon Langton, a fine bold and impetuous character though inferior to Stephan in many ways, had rushed to Rome in the first access of his blind religious zeal as the head-quarters of church-privilege.

And—he there had been disappointed, disenchanted, disgusted utterly : like many others who ascertain for the first time the difference between theory and practice, between the Catholic ideal and the Romish reality. He had found there infidelity nestled in what should have been the cradle of faith ; shameless immorality throned on the altar of religion ; utter idolatry, nay very heathenism, rampant over the prostrate and inanimate carcase of Christianity. For himself, though a believer in the oneness of the church and so of its one earthly head (a false conclusion this, by the interpolated word, earthly) he could not see a reason why ambition should corrupt it ; his own morals, though as an old soldier not like Stephan's quite immaculate, were yet white in comparison with the utter blackness of certain Cardinals and Abbots he knew of ; and, as for idolatry, it was a chief worry in his mind, if inclined to worship any mere image, how very unlike in form and

feature were divers famous figures of the Christ, the Virgin, and sundry popular Saints, whom he was well enough disposed to honour substantially, if he could. To him indeed (to tell plain truth) the only image he could find it in his heart honestly to worship was Angélique: therefore had he nobly shunned her.

He was alone in his cell one day, vexed and indignant at the profligacy yet hypocrisy of certain priests associated with him in the church of St. Sergius at Rome. Like the sons of Eli, they sinned notoriously in the very tabernacle. Simon was a man, but he also was an honest one; and no Englishman can brook hypocrisy. The baseness of those colleagues was intolerable: and he had stolen away to his solitary cell to be alone, and think—well, likely enough of that sparkling blue-eyed girl who whilome made the filthy Rue St. Jacques an avenue of brightness and beauty to him.

What is a man without affections? if you

answer, a monk: I rejoin, then a monk is a demon. But Simon, though a monk was still a man; and his affections, though as celibate chained down, were alive and struggled to be free.

There was a gentle tap at the door; which he answered sharply: no doubt one of those detestable priests.

A youth came in with a letter; he never looked at the bearer except to take notice of his large buff boots, but tore away the rosined silk round the bit of parchment,—a letter of the period.

What? brother Stephan alive?—he had utterly forgotten his existence: and an Archbishop too?—and on his way immediately to Rome?

The letter, it seems, never mentioned Angélique.

He turned to ask a question of the bearer, and was transfixed at that look like a frozen

man! but she with uncontrollable emotion flinging herself upon his neck woke him from his mute astonishment with a tempest of tears and kisses.

What could Simon do? What should he do? Ought he to rebuke her,—or himself? No! human love in spite of celibacy perforce is a sacred and a mighty power, ennobled by the Source from whence it glows.

For the sweetest hour in their existence hitherto, those poor exiled spirits were a solace to each other; a most bright oasis in the howling desert of the monkery and the nunnery.

CHAPTER XIX.

A New Primate.

STEPHAN LANGTON, Ex-Archbishop, Ex-Chancellor, the famous patriotic Englishman whom John dreaded and the Barons of England counted even in absence as their leader, was now with all his train at Viterbo; a city not far from Rome, but habitually (like most near relations) fighting with it. Lately there had been a terrible battle, wherein the Romans had won the day; and Viterbo had been forced to render back certain brazen gates to St. Peter's. Langton stopped at Viterbo, simply because he

cared not to enter Rome simultaneously with Angélique so fascinatingly disguised: let her find out Simon first, and save the dilemma of Archbishop Stephan appearing as her sponsor. The interests of England were at stake: he could not afford any risk of reputation.

Now, it happened just at this time that twelve monks of Canterbury came to Rome, requesting the Pope to confirm their election of one Reginald their Subprior (a vain obscure and ignorant person, but the corporation characteristically desired to honour one of themselves) for Archbishop of Canterbury; Hubert the late primate John's great friend, who had impudently crowned him as the "elected" king, knowing he could not claim as hereditary,—being just dead.

The King, hearing of these monks' insolence (so he termed it) in choosing an Archbishop without reference to him, commanded them to elect his choice, a certain warlike justiciary hight

John de Gray Bishop of Norwich; they dared not disobey, and so clumsily brought for confirmation to the papal chair both candidates, one of them to be chosen. Innocent saw his opportunity.

Instantly proceeding with all his court to Viterbo, on the plea of accepting in the Cathedral of the conquered city the homage of its principal inhabitants, Pope Innocent on the 17th of June 1207, resolved by one great act of arbitrary will to humble both King and clergy: he would dictate to England. That the occasion was admirable so far as its chief subject was concerned, hear Dean Milman's testimony in his history of Latin Christianity iv. 84; where he says "Innocent could not have found a churchman more unexceptionable, or of more commanding qualifications for the Primacy of England. Stephan Langton was an Englishman by birth, of irreproachable morals, profound theologic learning, of a lofty

firm yet prudent character, which unfolded itself at a later period of his life in a manner not anticipated by Pope Innocent. Langton had studied at Paris, and attained surpassing fame and honourable distinctions. Of all the high-minded wise and generous prelates who have filled the See of Canterbury none have been superior to Stephan Langton." This is great and discriminative eulogy, well justifying Innocent's selection.

For, on a set day, the great Head of Christendom announced that he would hear the rival claimants at Viterbo. He felt that his decision would be a Papal triumph, and he resolved it should be a splendid one. In the ancient cathedral Innocent was shrined upon the altar : he looked every inch a Pope, a priest upon a throne : "well formed, still young, of a most pleasing countenance," (I am quoting from Maimbourg's French History of the Crusades in the life of Innocent the Third,

book 7) “of a grand and most honourable bearing, a shrewd and enlightened mind, a wonderful memory, a solid judgment, a marvellous quickness of intellect combined with vast powers of application,” Innocent was a natural King of men. He was clothed in a vesture of cloth of gold covered with the finest lace needlework; he wore the tiara blazing with jewels; and behind him were the peacock fans. Particoloured guards (for Michael Angelo long afterwards selected the fashion of this period as most picturesque) with gaudy contrast surrounded the Triple Sovereign; and before him were ranged the scarlet semicircle of Cardinals. One black figure, spare, and white in face, with a thin red tonsure and a skull hung on the beads beside his crucifix, stood before the Pope in the attitude of prayer: it was the bloody fanatical enthusiast Dominic.

The monks of Canterbury were announced on deputation by a herald tabarded with embroidered keys. They came in clumsily enough;

coarse rustical and vulgar, and stupidly dazed with the scene as unused to such splendour and ceremony : the cathedral alone outshone poor Canterbury as much as Innocent in his glory outblazed the wretched Subprior. But their errand was as awkward as their coming : for they had as we know two candidates ; their own, this cowed unequal man ; and the King's, a mere military bishop, a good hunter and wine-bibber, but no theologian.

Innocent did not vouchsafe to hear their relative merits, but by a word settled the business.

“ Herald, summon Stephan Langton.”

Of course, he had been apprized of all beforehand ; and was ready in his monkish robe, as an Augustine brother of Newark.

He came forward, as the man in his tabard of keys and a couple of splendid ushers guided, and knelt before the Pontiff ; inquisitorial Dominic characteristically moving aside to give place to the Englishman.

“We, in the plenitude of our power, create thee, Stephan Langton, Cardinal of St. Chrysogonus at Rome, and Lord Archbishop of Canterbury within the realm of England.”

He rose; bowed to the Pope; sat on the Cardinal's bench, and blessed God that he might yet save England.

“But, an' it may please your Holiness, we'll give thee three thousand marks to buy our choice with!”

This bright thought of open bribery in the matter had it seems occurred to one of the monks, Elias Brandlefield; but the other eleven saw it wise at once to be loudly indignant with him for such asinine diplomacy; so they exclaimed with one voice,

“Nay then, but it shall be Stephan Langton; we be the choosers by the King's command, and we choose—”

“Peace, fools!” quietly said a Cardinal, afterwards Pope Honorius.

CHAPTER XX.

John's Finger-rings : and the Interdict.

As John of England was likely enough to be furious when he heard of this arrogant usurpation, Pope Innocent thought he might as well endeavour to conciliate him by pandering to two of his known weaknesses, superstitious trifling and a vain love of jewellery. So, with that returning awkward squad of monks, he sent to the King a letter and a gift : the letter, charmingly paternal, " exhorts our son to receive for Archbishop of Canterbury a man, a native of thine own kingdom, very well skilled both

in secular and spiritual learning, whose exemplary life and conversation will be of high advantage to thy bodie and thy soule:" the gift consisted of four gold finger-rings, to an elaborate description whereof Hume gives the honour of a whole page in history, elaborating the mystical virtues of a sapphire, a ruby, an emerald and a topaz: but which old Tyrrell dismisses much more contemptuously, "the great wonderful mysteries contained in the roundness of the rings and their various colours must needs (forsooth) signifie the four cardinal virtues; and might, if his holinesse had pleased, have represented any other four things whatever he was pleased to conclude."

However, the speculation proved a failure; the papal investment did not pay by any means: for, although John probably decorated his four fat fingers vain-gloriously enough with those magical rings, he was in a towering rage both with the twelve stupid monks and that intole-

nable Pope. Hearken again to Tyrrell : II. 734 :
“When the King had received the Pope’s letters concerning the vacating the election of the Bishop of Norwich, and the unexpected advancement of Cardinal Langton, he charged the monks of Canterbury with treason ; alleging, that in prejudice of his prerogative, they had first chosen their sub-prior without license, and then to make some feigned amends had elected the Bishop of Norwich ; and that though they had received money out of his exchequer for the expenses of their journey to obtain the Pope’s confirmation of the last election, yet they had as an aggravation of their first offence, presumed to choose Stephan de Langton *his declared enemy*, and had caused him to be consecrated Archbishop : for which cause, the King being in great fury and indignation sent Fulk de Cantelupe, and Henry de Cornebulle, two cruel and ill-natured knights with armed officers to drive the monks of

Canterbury out of England as being guilty of treason. These ruffians in pursuance of the King's command, went to Canterbury, and there entering the monastery with drawn swords, they commanded the prior and his monks in the King's name presently to depart out of England; and if they refused to obey they swore that they would burn them and their monastery together. The monks being at this greatly terrified and acting without good advice, all departed without any opposition, much less violence; and so passing into Flanders, were kindly received into the Abbey of St. Bertin and in other monasteries adjoining thereunto; then by the King's command, some of the monks of St. Augustin's abbey were put in their places to perform divine service; yet under the oversight of Fulk de Cantelupe abovementioned who seized and confiscated all the goods of the monks. When they were thus expelled their monastery, the King sent messengers to the

Pope with expostulatory letters in which he sets forth the injury that had been done him in vacating the election of the Bishop of Norwich and consecrating Stephan Langton Archbishop."

Our sometime acquaintance Fulk de Cantelupe then, as we see, has survived that tremendous kick and his twelve-mile walk in plate armour: and the monk of St. Martha's has attained to the European and historic fame of being, by John's own complaining confession, the king's declared enemy. Furthermore, John swore by his usual terrible oath which need not here be repeated, that "Stephan Langton at his peril should not set foot on the soil of England:" ere long he had to eat his words.

For, Pope Innocent was not a man to be baffled by a furious tyrant like King John; though he has, hereafter, to bend even the tiara beneath the English independence of the churl-born Stephan. So, the Pontiff commanded the

Bishops of London, Ely, and Worcester, to lay the kingdom under Interdict "if John would not receive Stephan for Archbishop:" whereupon John retorted, "that he would send all the prelates and clergy of England to the Pope, if he presumed to interdict his territories, and also to confiscate their goods ; further adding, that, if he found any Romans within his dominions, he would first put out their eyes and cut off their noses, and then send them on to Rome."

And both Pope and King were as good or bad as they threatened. The Interdict, a most cruel proceeding to those who laid more stress than Protestants do now on church-ordinances, was then flung forth, a thunder-cloud curse on the realm. For one man's wickedness, all the churches were closed, all religious rites abolished. The dead was buried in a ditch ; the bride married in the churchyard ; priests alone without laics solemnized mass ; crosses, images, relics, were all buried. The pious and paternal

head of the Church, by way of punishing a refractory king, made, as much as in him lay, a whole Christian nation infidel and heathen. All intercourse between God and man (to speak as a papist) had entirely ceased. It is a comfort, however, to be told, (I quote Milman) that by intercession with the Pope at Rome "Stephan Langton gained after awhile a relaxation of the interdict for his people, so far as to obtain Divine Service once a week." Already, our English hero was beginning to withstand the Pope.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Brotherly Meeting: and Angelique's position.

AFTER that scene in the cathedral of Viterbo, and its consequent congratulations and offers of hospitality, our Primate soon found himself at Rome, the honoured guest of Pope Innocent, and fêted by all the college of Cardinals. That he gained friends wherever he went, and by his good sense, kind manners, independent bearing, and universal accomplishments, made the name of Englishman more popular than it ever was before or since, the present writer distinctly avouches: for Stephan won and wore his

honours not for himself alone, but for God and his country. Therefore, when he sat in the highest seat, he was not proud ; when men admired him, he was not vain : when all tongues spoke well of him, he was only humble and thankful. The Pope was amply justified in having consecrated such a Primate.

In Rome the pith and force of his discourses filled every church to overflowing where he was expected to preach ; and his Notes upon the Gospels, multiplied by hand-copiers, were read everywhere, leavening the head-quarters of Apostacy with primitive Christian doctrines. Dominic, indeed, more than once smelt out heresy, and expostulated ; but the shrewd Pope wanted Langton to bring down a king—perhaps also a kingdom—withal : added to which, what true believer could find a particle of fault with the original and most eloquent preacher, whose sermons to the honour of the Virgin, allegorized as an enticing Alice, breathed more

than a divine love—because, in truth, a human one.

All this popularity, secular and spiritual, was of many months growth and duration: but we may well be sure that Stephan had not been at Rome a day before he found out Simon.

The meeting between the brothers was not dramatic nor romantic nor anything of the sort; a bystander might have said it was barely affectionate: but when two sensible Englishmen of forty or thereabouts meet each other for the first time since infancy they practically do not, though haply born brothers, fall into each other's arms and faint away.

That each was heartily glad to see once more the brother he had long thought dead (if he thought of him at all) is nothing more nor less than the simple truth: but they had no rhapsodies to expend on this occasion. At the same time both, as we know, were capable of the most ardent love in spite of their monastics, full of

passion and affectionate emotions ; but these volcanics are very much matters of sex ; and, but for the prest hand the lit eye and the cordial word of welcome, Englishman with Englishman is not apt to be demonstrative. Germans may swear eternal friendship on the spot, embracing Frenchmen call on earth and heaven to witness their mutual ecstasy, Italy, Spain, nay nearer Ireland also, give evidence of what may be styled a melodramatic attachment : but our self-contained and self-relying race are of a nature stern but true that will meet a brother after three-and-thirty years with little more of the pomp and circumstance of friendship than if he had parted from us yesterday : not that we are a cold people, far from it ; but we are habitually so sincere, so hateful of humbug, that we prefer to hide our feelings rather than be found to make a show of them openly. When we cannot help it, (that is, when a woman's in the case, be she mother or wife or sister or lover,) we are

apt to break down utterly and honestly : but even before a father or a brother we restrain ourselves and stand up firm, the indomitable very possibly the proud Anglo-Saxon islander.

Our pair of brothers, unless they entered at once on the separate stories of their lives, could not have many topics of conversation ; for those sweet and early Friga-Street recollections were too few to last very long : but there were two others of no small interest common to both ; their poor old father still existing, now happily after all his wanderings anchored in Surrey ; and the engrossing theme of Angélique.

During Stephan's week at Viterbo we may well believe that she had poured out the best part of her late adventures into Simon's ear ; and the two brothers, remarkably alike in person themselves from the cradle upwards, found a new sympathy with each other from that strange similarity as to their tastes and destinies in Love. Angélique, the miraculous image of

Alice, had brought the two brothers together, and stood as a sister between them : a sister, I say, pre-eminently to Stephan, though more than a sister to Simon.

We are picturing (remember) and with pretty accurate truth the state of society in England and elsewhere at the opening of the thirteenth century ; and we must deal with facts as they were, stating broadly what was the general usage in those times, however little commendable they might be thought in these. Even now however an Irish prelate and a brace of reputable Colonial Bishops with him, are found to wink at polygamy in Christianized Caffres, on the principle of doing no injustice to scores of decent (and in their own country lawful) wives who would be ruined by a forced and immediate divorce : the practice may be allowed to die out, say their Most Reverend and Right Reverend Lordships ; it would be cruelty and folly in the missionaries to attempt to kill it suddenly.

Now let us turn to Hume II. 458, who helps me out of a difficulty, explaining the social position of a hundred thousand happy and respected Angéliques in mediæval Europe: the words are those of our historian slightly abridged: "After the canons which established the celibacy of the clergy were by the zealous endeavours of Archbishop Anselm more rigorously executed in England, the ecclesiastics gave, almost universally and avowedly, into the use of what has since been called left-handed wedlock: and the court of Rome, which had no interest in prohibiting this practice made very slight opposition to it. The custom was become so prevalent that in some cantons of Switzerland, before the Reformation, the laws not only permitted, but also enjoined, such alliances on the younger clergy, regarding them as a kind of *inferior marriage*; such as is still practised in Germany among the nobles, and may be regarded by the candid as an appeal from the

tyranny of civil and ecclesiastical institutions, to the more virtuous and more unerring laws of nature."

Kings and Dukes in our own day have similarly made appeal; and Angélique (she was not a nun, recollect, as Alice is) would find herself even now in company with very noble names under like circumstances. Anyhow, happiness fidelity and love were hearth-dwellers at Rome with Angélique and Simon. When the laws of men are daringly set up against the laws of God, obedience becomes a sort of sin: and when Anselm and his sort "forbid to marry" they wickedly compel their brethren to take a false position in the eyes of men, however justified before the throne of Heaven.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Scourge: and Simon at Winchester.

MEANWHILE John raged like a demon through his miserable realm: most of the secular clergy were expelled; and as for monks and friars, everywhere the Abbeys and Priors were in flames; and if John's Poitevins and Flamands did not roast their wretched inmates in them then and there, rest assured they died miserably somewhere in the forests: as for laics, John divided them into Baronial partizans, on whom he executed razzia to the uttermost; and his own serf-subjects, whom he

taxed, scutaged, and oppressed also to the uttermost ; licentious with some, cruel with many, wantonly disgusting all.

For example : our old friend Sir Wilhelm de Braiose, grandson and heir of the good Sir Tristrem, a moderate man, and of no special party, suffered terribly : for, unluckily, his Lady had been heard by one Mauluck, a royal evesdropper, to allude to Prince Arthur's murder ; which was evidently so sore a topic with the felon king, that he immediately seized the Lady and her five children (De Braiose himself happening, by good fortune, at that moment to be in Reygate cavern at a gathering there), and carrying them to Windsor, with fiendish deliberation, actually starved the whole family to death ! This is a type and instance of what was going on everywhere throughout broad England.

Yet more, the raging king let loose war's hell-hounds, without the shadow of a pretext,

against unoffending Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. His apologists (even this wretch has found apologists), pretend that he was mad ; in some sort, his acts justified their silly charity : one proof being this, that he most cruelly destroyed twenty-eight young Welshmen of high family left in his custody as hostages ; whom every sense of right and propriety ought to have saved, not only harmless, but in honour.

But one sickens at his crimes : the Devil who drove him raging over his realm, did not leave him quiet at home : the king accused his poor girl-queen of adultery, and imprisoned her ; he seized and wantonly ill-used the wife of Eustace de Vesci, a magnate of high name ; he caught an unfortunate arch-deacon, and made him wear canonicals made of beaten lead, till he died miserably of the cold poisonous weight : and he heaped honours and wealth on a bold blaspheming preacher, named Alexander the

Mason, who had the audacious assurance to tell his congregation that, "the King was the scourge of God's anger for their sins, ordained to rule his evil people with a rod of iron, and to break them in pieces like a potter's vessel; to bind their princes in chains, and their nobles with links of iron." John eagerly accepted the mission of his subject's scourge, and was proud to take office under Heaven as England's Attila !

But, just about this time, it rejoices us to see the chroniclers reporting that one "Simon de Langton came to him from over sea to Winchester, where the King lay: and there, before divers, bouldly desired him to receive Stephan, his brother, as archbishop:" and when the weak and wicked King replied, "He dared not now," that Simon answered, "Nay, I will do all things on thy Majesty's behalf, an' thou seek my brother's mercy." At which "sawcie answe're" the King became—(and no wonder),—more furious than ever.

Simon, however, appears to have caught no damage: he had been sent over (*Angélique*, no doubt, with him) as Stephan's legate to King John from Pontivy in Bretagne; whither, to be nearer England, the Primate had progressed from Rome. Philip was easily reconciled to a man whom Innocent loved and fostered: more especially as the Pope had conferred the Archbishopric of Rheims on a special favourite of the King; in fact, it was exactly the thing he wished, seeing the great Englishman had many in France envious of his honours; only that the Pope had adroitly gained the dangerous precedent of appointing prelates in France, instead of the King.

Pontivy is not far from those vast strange Celtic ruins for which the Morbihan is famous: there still remain evidences of five winding parallel avenues, no less than twelve miles long, constructed of stone logs fixed in the earth, and of different heights, with cromlechs and

rocking-stones at intervals: a gigantic relic of the Serpent-worship, which this spotted twelve-mile snake with its joints and convolutions may be supposed to represent to the eyes of a crow in upper air, and for men below gigantically to typify.

However, Stephan, with his heart full of England's wrongs, and never for a moment oblivious of his darling Alice, cared less about those wonderful monuments of man's power and superstition in the unhistoric age, than probably you or I do: therefore, we will say not much about the "Addison's walk" of those days where Langton used to meditate. But one thing we have seen he did both quickly and vigorously: though the ports were shut against himself, he forced them open to his legate; thus they were free to his 'bold brother'—as Milman calls him: and Simon accordingly bearded the King.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Simon and Angélique pay certain visits.

RETURNING from Winchester towards Dover, local geography will tell us that the Pilgrim's Way necessitates a call at St. Catherine's and Aldeburie. Simon and his recognized semiwife the happy Angélique, always with him to his great help and comfort, rejoiced at such a chance: for he had longed for many years to look up his childhood's haunts again; and there was possibly his old father there too, unseen for thirty-seven years. As for Angélique, her longing was to ask that gentle Abbess's pardon

for having in some sort been ungrateful and deceived her: but she had not been over communicative on the subject with Simon; the nunnery was a hateful topic to her.

When therefore after having passed Farnham Castle and the hospitality of the monks of Waverley, they crossed the Hog's Back and neared St. Catherine's, Angélique's heart avowedly failed her, and she begged Simon to go forward alone first with half the train; intending to follow with the other half, after her husband had prepared the way by explaining her presence. He gladly undertook it to please her; but was surprised at the result.

Stephan had told him nothing very specially about Alice, nor her exact whereabouts: only Angélique had mentioned incidentally what she knew; and it was not much more than that Alice loved Stephan and in face and figure was very like her. These matters however, as mere words, made small impression upon Simon: so

he went with no excessive curiosity to St. Catherine's beforehand, as agreed ; and craved an audience of the Abbess.

In the same room where we have seen her a year or two ago, at the same oriel, and with the same padlocked casket of letters beside her sat the beauteous matron, to receive her noble visitor : for he was announced without other name, as " the Primate's legate to the King."

He came in : the Abbess bowed,—and dropt her veil instantly, seeming to tremble as she stood ; he spoke some casual words of compliment, advancing towards her ; she replied in a nervous trepidation ; and Simon to reassure her, thought it might be well to say,

" I have a message to thee, Lady Abbess ; Stephan Langton—"

At that word, poor Alice, fancying this marvellous brotherly resemblance to be (however altered by twenty-two long years) none other than Stephan himself, ran forward and fell

into his arms. Happily the audience was a private one.

“Sister,—I am Simon Langton, *his* brother : look up,—here let me lead thee to the window : his name (I wot thou lovest it) hath touched thee : hearken, dear sister, he will see thee here ere long. Hearken, sister, and my own hearth-wife Angélique—”

“Art thou then only his brother ? O Stephan, my heart hath pined to see thee many years ;—can his brother be so like him ?”

“Yes, good Abbess, yes : we were alike from infancy.”

“And Angélique too ? how strange.”

It was now Simon’s turn to be surprized ; for when Alice raised her veil, the resemblance was extraordinary : albeit possession of the original made its charming copy of less heart-thrilling consequence.

And here too comes in Angélique herself ; just in time to show Simon the living pair of

sisterly portraitures, elder and younger. And then they kissed each other heartily; and matters were explained; and Alice was not a bit surprized to find she was right as to her untold guess about the mysterious disappearance: and Angélique was asked if she would like to see the sisterhood? but she decidedly declined that privilege; insomuch that the True Cross miracle remained for ages the unquestioned marvel of St. Catherine's nunnery: except the Abbess, nobody had seen the face of their veiled visitor.

Just at parting Alice said to Simon, "Brother, thou didst give me a good hope just now that haply I may see him ere long: how soon, thinkest thou, how soon?"

"Thou hast had long patience, I wot, my sister, these many years; a little longer and the Primate will be here."

"The Primate? Is my Stephan then the Primate of all England?"

“ Yea, Lady Abbess, he hath been consecrated by Pope Innocent Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.”

“ His dream of greatness therefore is fulfilled ; so also shall be his resolve of freeing wretched England : and so too (of less import to others, though everything to me) will be our mutual hope so long deferred of seeing one another once again. I thank Heaven for such blest fulfilments !”

They have said farewell ; and on their way to Wodetone must needs pass through Aldeburie. Alas ! for the havoc made by civil war all over the land : universal pillage bloodshed and fire,—the fields untilled for lack of peace and men, the hamlets in a blaze, and misery and desolation everywhere. The poor serfs cowered in corners of their smoking hovels like wild beasts, each man feeling in himself the curse of a wicked King. As for the magnates, come with our travellers and pass through

Aldeburie Park on their route eastwardly. The good Knight is an exile, his family starved to death within four walls in the Round Tower of Windsor, the Great House burnt, and all the Braiose tenants massacred: this dark August in the year 1209 shows now a fearful contrast in the Park to our opening Mayday of bright 1186: O for the days of good King Henry!

A similar tide of devastation had flowed all down the valley; and the trouts were growing fierce and fat on blood. Marauders had very lately been that way, to work John's special vengeance on a neighbourhood that bred and reared the Langtons; and his ruffian Brabanters had spared nothing but the churches in their cruelty and superstition: old and young, man woman and child, gentle and simple, cleric and laic, all had been ruthlessly murdered; their dwellings burnt, their orchards cut down, their wells and streams choked with the corpses of

themselves and all they loved ! How terrible a judgement is a tyrant King.

With sore hearts the sympathizing Angélique and indignant Simon reach old Friga-Street at last ; passing through the drear demesne of Wodetone Manor with its rambling old mansion still smouldering from the recent flames. And where were all the inhabitants ? What hope remained of finding his poor old father still alive ? At all events though, let us look up that well-remembered grange of Lonesome, nestling in a dinted valley to the northward of Leith Hill.

All desolate still ; but with fresher tracks than ever of the recent storm that has swept all life and loveliness before it : some cottages still blazing,—some mutilated wretches still alive.

Simon left his train, and went alone for a few paces forward to where he well remembered had been once his pleasant home.

Ah ! to return anywhither after more than

thirty years, what a melancholy homily of Life and Death it is. The place that knew us knoweth us no more ; friends are gone, or have forgotten us ; conscience is at work miserably, contrasting what we are with what we were ; new houses have sprung up, and old ones been pulled down ; the reverend oaks of our truant recollections are long ago turned into timber, and impudent young saplings in their stead have grown into large trees since ; old haunts, glorified by memory and magnified by years of reverie, how mean they look now, how dark in the dim rushlight of reality ! All is change, sorrow, and disappointment.

But when, as in Simon's case, the beautiful home which he left as a boy is next in middle age beheld a charred ruin, still as smoke and with blood upon the threshold, O what a freezer to the heart's warm hope, what a difference between expectation and fulfilment !

Simon drew nigh : yes, that old vine scorched

upon the southern wall, must be the same wherefrom he and Stevie had so often gathered bunches; and there is his mother's own petted jessamine-plant, very very old now, and covering the porch.

What was that? a groan? He went in, and clambered about the ruinous heap of smoking rafters. Hark! another? yes, under there; near the old chimney-corner.

A strange premonition seized him,—and shouting to his attendants to make all haste and help, he set the example of vigorous work by dragging out beam after beam.

“—I knew it would! I trusted to it: I knew it would!”—Simon and his train worked hard in the direction of that voice: he remembered it.

And now they have cleared a passage; and out of the charry dust and smoke have pulled out a poor old man bleeding and scorched and begrimed; faint, famished, dying: at a glance,

in spite of all things, Simon recognized his father.

“It has saved me,—as I swore it would! O blessed, blessed,—ey? who’s here?—and thou too, little Si—?”

Angélique ran in, with a precious cup of cold water: and greedily the old man let them pour the nectar down his fevered throat. He rallied for a moment:

“My son, my son! and I have seen them both!—I knew it would,—I trusted it: here, Si—, take it, take it, take the blessed treasure: one little morsel on my tongue when I am dead,—and all the rest, keep it, keep it, kee-e-ep—”

And thus he died quietly in Simon’s arms within his own old home, even as he had prayed to die for years!

From his relaxing hand fell a little packet, the relic he adored, his trust, his Saviour, his God. Simon picked it up, read the Rouen certificate, and devoutly believed it all: his first act

was to place a splintered morsel on the poor pale tongue; his next, carefully to stow in the safest corner of his pouch that precious fragment.

All seemed over now for Friga-Street; save only this.

The whole realm being still under Interdict, burial in consecrated places was impossible: the dead lay where he died, till some kindly neighbour scraped a hole to hide him in. So Simon, with a filial feeling towards his father, and an affectionate memory for his once dear home, did the best thing under the circumstances: in the old vine arbour at the corner of his mother's garden, with the help of his attendants who soon grubbed a grave, the good son not without a tear and a prayer reverently buried his father.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Excommunication and Deposition.

WHEN Innocent heard that John was still obdurate and refractory, (for the Pope cared little about his other crimes) he determined to follow up the blow of Interdict over the kingdom by those of Excommunication of the Man, and Deposition of the King. That the wretch deserved it richly, all are agreed; though, as often happens to criminals, for altogether other sins than that for which he specially suffered; the sole redeeming feature in John's character being his obstinate defiance of

papal usurpation. But in every other sense he well deserved to have the mark of Cain set on him; to be a moral leper shunned and loathed of all men; to be curst, and accounted a contamination whithersoever he turned; to be an outcast and altogether miserable: yea, and to have the royal crown dashed from the brows of a tyrant.

On St. Michael's night Pope Innocent in a stole of white linen, as at Whitsuntide, pronounced the sentence of "Panteles Aphorismos" with all terrible severity.

At midnight mass, in the mortuary chapel of St. Chrysogonus, hung with inky sackcloth and dimly lit by oil-wicks in skulls, surrounded by the black brothers of Augustin and the cowed and hooded friars of Dominic, Innocent commanded the effigy of John of England to be brought in upon a bier. The Pope then, throned upon the altar, commanding the bearers to approach, with his foot spurned its

crown from the head of the image ; solemnly extinguished the two torches that stood at head and feet ; and, the dead-bell tolling all the while, uttered over it thrice a hideous and comprehensive curse, the culminating phrase whereof consigned the typed original as damned to the custody of Judas and the Devil !

The force of all this portentous ceremonial was just the gist of other like forces, public opinion ; in those days everybody believed it efficacious ; every one held the Pope's ban and his blessing to be potencies ; and therefore the sentence of Excommunication practically became a curse indeed.

When the Bishops of Ely London and Worcester, coming over from their temporary continental refuge for the purpose, promulgated that sentence in England, all men fled from John as from a pestilence ; any might slay him, and none might aid him ; his very Chancellor and Intimate, Hugo de Wells, deserted his evil

master, and went over to Primate Langton at Pontivy : the wretched King looked round him on every side, and save his bloody mercenaries who now might kill him too, saw no friend no counsellor no follower no helper of any sort in heaven or earth : he was alone, alone with his damned self and Judas and the Devil !

It was quite intolerable ; and secretly he managed to send those legates word that he would yield, and take the Pope's Archbishop : but anon with treacherous weakness he recanted, and "vowed he would hang him if he caught him." Whereupon Pope Innocent published a Crusade against the kicking excommunicant ; and gave his kingdom to Philip Augustus for the mere trouble of taking it.

Gladly did Philip accept the office, and made enormous preparations by land and sea ; but, just as he had spent vast treasures therein and had collected men and ships innumerable, the wily John sent to Pope Innocent his uncon-

ditional surrender of the crown of England.

The exulting Innocent had gained his end; and, by way of a higher triumph in killing two birds with one stone, resolved publicly to humiliate King Philip also: commanding him, as his obedient son, instantly to lay down his arms against John, seeing that he was now placed under Rome's ægis, as a feudatory of the Papal see.

Philip was furious at the disappointment; but a threat of excommunication if he disobeyed soon brought his stout looks down; and so by way of doing something, and not being found in the ignominious position of him who

“A king of France with forty thousand men,
Marched up a hill—and then marched down again,”

turned his chagrined wrath causelessly against Ferrand Count of Flanders; sticking thereby a

cankrous thorn in his own side for years : and losing his own fleet instantaneously ; for John of England, having then many ships collected to disperse the French armada, cleverly made instant alliance with Ferrand and (in his behalf, so as not to exasperate the Pope, who in fact secretly enjoyed it) destroyed the navy of King Philip.

The Pope's great end was thus secured : and John had now humbly to do three unpleasant things ; first, personally to receive Stephan Langton as Primate ; secondly, to pay down a hundred thousand marks by way of compensation to the clergy for the destruction of their properties ; and thirdly, to surrender his crown to Pandulph, the nuncio of Innocent.

Before however John did either of this triad of inconveniences, he resolved on a piece of petty revenge by way of recreation ; and on sundry wholesale cruelties by way of raising the wind.

First for the revenge: a certain poor old enthusiast, one Peter of Wakefield, an eremite, had prophesied that the excommunicated King should lose his crown before Ascension-Day; it was manifestly coming true, for Pandulph was to have the crown surrendered to him immediately;—and Ascension-Day was some time off. So meanwhile, John, by dint of his ten thousand mercenaries being still too powerful for any to control him, seized the poor man, imprisoned him awhile in Corfe Castle, and thence had him “dragged at horses’ tails to the town of Wareham where he hanged him on a gibbet” as an impostor,—however true a prophet for the nonce; and to make sure that his disloyal gift might not be hereditary, had his innocent son hanged also beside him.

But the King’s other wholesale cruelties were less personally vindictive, and amounted to the dignity of a measure of finance, compendious and economical. To secure the required crore

of compensation marks betimes, and sundry other lacs for himself, John seized all the Jews in the kingdom, male and female; and so “grievously tormented them that they gave up to him all they had, and promised more, so they might escape such cruel and various kinds of tortures.”

No doubt, his Majesty’s Exchequer was thus cheaply and agreeably replenished: and it appears that the process of extortion was sometimes conducted not without a spice of humour; if we make instance of a certain wealthy Jew of Bristol, who though cruelly whipped, pinched, burnt with red-hot brands and otherwise terribly used, still held out manfully and threatened to be a martyr unto death rather than pay down ten thousand marks; until John, who was conducting the sport in person, bethought him of the horrors of dentistry; and day by day for seven days the fine old Maccabæan father was brought before the

throne to have a grinder tugged out : but on the eighth the poor wretch gave in ; whereon the tyrant pleasantly observed, that “a Jew’s eye might be a quick ransom, but Jews’ teeth were the richer harvest.”

CHAPTER XXV.

Armorica.

STEPHAN, now wishing to be nearer England, has sometime left Pontivy, with his court of exiled prelates and the Chancellor ; and passing through Rennes (where some say he was once bishop, but it is a manifest mistake for Rheims) went on to Mont St. Michel ; that wondrous pile of strength and beauty, outstanding as a sea-girt watch-tower to the Garden of Bretagne. There they tarried awhile ; and in that aerial cathedral which pinnacles the rock, (midway thronged by its precipitous town, and sur-

rounded at the base with a strong *enceinte* of Norman curtains and round-towers), Stephan the Primate celebrated Mass, preached "Liberty to the captive," and remembered Alice.

Thence, taking boat by the shore line of Avranches and Granville to Coutances, in that splendid Gothic temple his eloquence again was heard by listening crowds on behalf of God and his country; and from Coutances the Primate and his train embarked for Jersey; then better known as Csarsey, or Cæsarea, part of the ancient Norman province of Neustria.

In that train, I need hardly say, always nearest to him, was his dear old friend, the humble but noble-hearted Hal. Never since that fiery trial of his domestic afflictions had he left his master's side: upon Will Fern and others of King Robin's faithful foresters, (several of whom conveniently were Normans) had long ago devolved the office of link between Stephan and the Barons: Hal, the faithful Christian

Hal, chastened in the furnace of affliction, was now no more a servant, but a friend. As for Simon and Angélique, they lived a life of no small excitement, in tempestuous England, moving from place to place, as safety counselled in those perilous times; but they chiefly found refuge in Reygate and its neighbourhood.

Stephan's errand in Jersey, after threading the dangerous navigation of the Minquiers (those hundred rocky islets, sole remnants of the submerged territory that before the earthquake of March 709, united all Armorica), was twofold: to pay honour to the martyred St. Helier, and to win over for the Baronial cause a certain noble Cæsarean, Regnault de Carteret.

The holy martyr had already been dead three centuries; but even now, with the addition of seven more, his hermitage remains intact. On a lofty and lonely rock, ocean-girt at high-water, may still be seen the rudely-

built hovel where, for years, until certain pirates slew him, the solitary eremite wasted his existence by preaching to the winds and to the waves : a long cavity in the rock, scooped like a grave to the shape of his body, marks the cold ascetic's bed ; and a small enclosure on the top of the rock is still called St. Helier's garden, where he grew his lentils. Hard by, and accessible at ebb-tide, is the rugged islet since fortified, and called Château Elizabeth ; but in those days its inhospitable shores contained only a small Priory of five black Augustine canons ; who daily said mass there, though only to each other, in honour of the martyred saint.

Stephan paid his tribute of devotion where alone it was due ; for, though he might fairly honour the godly man, he only paid worship to God ; the wholesome doctrines of the Albigeois had sunk into his soul, and he had somehow become less a Papist than a Christian.

Nevertheless, as the Pope's Primate, he gave his Archiepiscopal blessing to those five old canons; enriching them besides with divers gifts and comforts; for, rest assured, Pope Innocent had been worldly-wise enough, not to let his created Archbishop go as a penniless friar on his triumphal way.

After this, they make progress to Jersey proper, with an especial view to St. Ouen's Manor, the fine old moated Castle of De Carteret; that ancient Armorican noble, who had recently repelled from his native island, with such gallantry and success, the invading forces of King Philip. On him all Stephan's eloquence was fruitless; let us confess one failure amid many successes; the burly Norman knight who abhorred a French king, and could hardly tolerate an English one, yet recognized in John, with all his sins, the only superior his pride could brook, his lawful Norman suzerain. He would not join the Barons' League, nor

listen to what he called treason; nay more, he delicately counselled an early departure to the political Prelate; and Stephan was too wise a diplomatist not to take the hint.

It is only fair to state that a year or two afterwards the grateful John, who heard of all this, honoured Jersey with his personal presence, and conferred upon his faithful Channel islands, sole relics of Normandy to England, their famous "Bill of rights and privileges;" under which through so many centuries they have enjoyed the blessing of liberty. It was given "graciously and freely to those loyal islands" as a piece of caprice and by way of spiting England for its zealous pursuit of the Great Charter, and is called 'The Constitution of King John:' whereby they are for ever held exempt from all foreign and intermediate dependence, being subject only to their sovereign in council: they are governed by their own laws and judged by native judges, 'the jurates' or sworn coroners

elected by themselves: in language, manners and habits they are a little nation of Normans still, the sole unmixed remnant in existence of that interesting people.

With all speed therefore, as De Carteret was choleric, our voyagers set sail for Guernsey; the ancient Cerniows-ey, Armorican for Corner-isle. Here they were gladly received and hospitably entertained, as all travellers between France and England were ever wont to be: but after his ill success with the stout De Carteret, our Patriot was too shrewd to attempt recruiting in those latitudes: so, as he had to stay there possibly some months, till circumstances should force for him an open way to England, he wisely held his tongue about political converts. The English Barons (our prelate calculated) would probably be strong enough to fight their own battle, without the help of Guernsey Jersey Alderney or Sark.

Therefore among Sarnia's romantic bays,

ancient churches, and Druidical remains Stephan Langton patiently abode his time, which evidently was not yet: if he made no political converts, he probably made many religious ones; especially among the relics of aboriginal Celts in that island, who still worshipped Thor and Woden, nay the very stones themselves, at the frequent Cromlechs and Poquelayes. To the more enlightened sort also he preached a famous sermon on “the everlasting gospel of the grace of God,” with little admixture of human superstitions, in the then new church of Câtel, or Sancta Maria de Castro, consecrated in 1203: in old St. Samson’s, even at that time hoar with age, his christian eloquence was heard: and in the primitive vault-roofed chapel of St. Apolline, now desecrated as a barn and with its ancient red chalk frescoes whitewashed, he spoke in Norman-French to the wondering few it could accommodate truths unheard within those walls since the days of Serk’s first missionary, St.

Maglorius. We may be sure that the zealous annotator and multiplier of the Bible lost no occasion for saving souls ; Stephan Langton, in the comparative obscurity of his Guernesey retreat could not be hid, but was a light of men. Let us leave him awhile doing good among the Islanders, and turn to another scene of our tale.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A Call at the Alhambra.

ONE unexpected effect of the deposition of England's King by Papal audacity had been to make many of our best Barons rally round him in spite of his excommunication. They stood for England,—ay even side by side with a vile John too, as against that arrogant Pope: private wrongs, public tyrannies, the personal hatefulness of a felon monarch all were merged in baronial patriotism.

For a little while the recalcitrating King was even popular; Englishmen abhor Ultramontane

usurpation. But it lasted not longer than his quarrel with the Pope ; the moment he gave in, and lost the heroic attitude of standing up for his country's independence and his own, the tide turned, and he became more hateful than ever : in his fatuous desperation he then planned and well nigh executed a scheme incredible but for the respectable testimony of Matthew Paris.

The Moors were now overrunning Spain, and boasted that they would extinguish Christianity in that vast region : creeping across from Africa by the Pillars of Hercules, they had swarmed all over Andalusia, and threatened to be masters also of the two Castiles and Arragon. To the disordered mind of John, the excommunicated man, not yet absolved,—to the thought of the deposed English King, not yet restored as an Italian tributary, this triumph of Antichrist seemed to promise some shadow of help ; and he actually sent over emissaries to treat with

Mohammed al Nassir, then reigning Caliph of Granada, offering alliance offensive and defensive against Christian Europe : nay more, the caitiff volunteered to abjure the Cross, if desired, as the price of Mohammed's friendship.

One Robert of St. Albans a renegade monk, and a brace of John's most thorough-going followers, Sir Thomas de Erdington and Ranulf son of Nicholas his esquire, went the long weary journey to Granada with these precious propositions : and we may well believe the old chronicler when he asserts that they " marvelled greatly " at the glories of the Alhambra.

England was at least two centuries behind Southern Europe in the arts refinements and conveniences of life : while the Saracens had brought into Spain all the ancient Eastern luxury, with its barbaric pomp of colours, silks, embroidery, gems and gold.

When our rough knight and his esquire, plated in steel and buff-leather, in company with

that black-robed shaveling their spokesman, strode up to the marble-inlaid courts beneath those wondrous roofs, fretted and stalactitically dropped with gilded carving, they were positively terrified, believing it an enchanted palace: all so quiet, vast, lonely, beautiful; nothing heard but the silver fall of fountains, nothing seen but exquisitely painted ceilings walls and arches, apparently uninhabited, and opening into gardens full of gaudy flowers and aromatic trees.

Anon, the scene changed dazzlingly. Their unsandalled guides, a hideous black eunuch and two mutes with drawn scymetars, fingered their thick lips for silence to those noisy spurs as they neared a tapestried archway. On a sudden by some means unseen, the curtains slowly drew aside; and at the end of a vast vault of colour, lit with a thousand golden lamps, and surrounded by a gorgeous crowd sat in his divan Mohammed the Conqueror.

Alone of all that brilliant court, the great

Emir seemed to be blind to its magnificence ; for he was, or affected to be, absorbed in the Koran : not the rainbow of veiled beauties round his golden cushions, nor the plumed array of swarthy warriors beyond, nor even the arrival of barbarian England's awkward embassy, could draw his holy glances from the sacred page.

At last by an interpreter, out spoke the monk Robert ; for he was not half so much abashed as the knight and his esquire :

“John the King salutes Mohammed the Emir, and seeks an alliance with him.”

“Enquire of the messenger if ‘John the King’ intends ‘his people’ also.”

“No ! I’ll be sworn upon my sword, no !” shouted the proud Norman,—“John of England as king standeth alone, and taketh not account of the rabble.”

There was an uneasy murmur in that thronged hall, when the interpreter made known that the ruler despised his people.

“But our King,” interposed Ranulf with additional want of tact, “will kiss the Koran ay and give his creed up and his crown too, an thou wilt help him.”

“Ask if the Giaour is a tyrant.”

“Yea!” said Robert the monk with over-plainness; for he was vexed at his stolid colleagues, and ashamed of the embassy: “his highness is renounced of his own nation, and renounces them and their religion: but he can bring a crown and a convert to Mohammed.”

“Bid the embassy depart, with safe conduct: such a king must be a madman: Allah forbid that his servant be allied with that infidel lunatic. As for this black fakir with his circlet of hair, give him a shawl to turban his head withal, and a purse of gold sequins for his bold embassy: the others may depart without a gift.”

So ended this disgraceful mission: wherein John’s moral depths reach the abyss of degra-

dition ; it is a parallel case to that of the infamous Pope Alexander the Sixth, who as a climax to his crimes and cruelties wound up all by avowed worship of the devil. On monk Robert's return, he must have made his own story good, and silenced both knight and squire, for John rewarded his service by making him Abbot of St. Albans.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Shipwreck.

NEWS came to Langton in Guernesey that John had yielded, and desired to receive him at Winchester. A special providence prevented it ; for the treacherous King meant to hang him out of hand, and so by another murder get rid of a man he hated.

However, the Primate bade farewell to his kind hosts in Sarnia, sent most of his train and the Bishops with him (who much distrusted John's sincerity) to St. Maloes and thence to Paris ; and with his faithful Hal and a few per-

sonal attendants took boat for Weymouth, accounted a most perilous voyage in those days : the wretched junk-like galley of the period rolled about helplessly as a tub in the Channel seas, (for, though the mariner's compass was just invented, it was a scarce and precious luxury,) and there was mighty little skill to help the luck or boldness of the mariner.

Nevertheless, on the high poop of a great open boat, half-decked and with three rows of oars, Langton stood and blest the people of St. Pierre crowding to see his departure : while overhead swung perilously the loose coarse sail of matting from its clumsy yard on a short thick mast with a hamper atop ; wherein sat the skipper looking out ; large gaudy streamers on crossticks awkwardly tangling the willowropes, and flapping smartly in all faces.

Scarcely had the rowers well struck out beyond the castellated islet of Cor-nez and got clear of its reefs at low water, than one of those

typhoons so reasonably dreaded by the Channel-Islanders came sweeping over the sea like a charge of cavalry. It was full in our voyager's favour, and there was plenty of sea room ; so far well : and the rowers hastily lugged in their oars, while the mainsail full to bursting did the work for them.

Anon,—and light was fast failing to boot,—the skipper in his bird's-nest spied danger ahead : he was making for Aurigny (or as we now say Alderney) but the stormy wind had driven him right into the Swinge, just past its only quiet time of flood, and ebbing furiously ; like a mad sea-rapid, cascading over rocks and shallows. Hopelessly and helplessly the mariners looked on, while the huge craft whirling round and round like a log in a whirlpool seemed rushing to inevitable wreck. But Stephan maintained his self-possession, and seemed the true pilot in the storm : watercraft had not been wanting to the accomplishments of his

forestry days, and his spirit always rose with the occasion of danger : so, the skipper being still aloft on the look-out and instantly engaged in shouting directions to the steerer, Stephan took virtual command of the idle oarsmen, and by directing their energies wisely, averted the catastrophe for a time ; for, making them use their oars in masses as punt-poles to avoid collision with the rocks, they swung from menacing rock to rock through many perilous places ; until at last on a sudden the bow of the wretched junk was hurled higher than its poop's went upon a grating granite reef just under the wrathful waters,—and immediately the vessel went to pieces.

Blow after blow, the breakers crashed it like an egg-shell ; night was coming on, and the gale rising : but Stephan, not without an apostolic prayer aloud to Him who stills the storm and saves in trouble, remembering Paul's shipwreck bade everybody lash himself to a spar or

plank or to a couple of oars, these being fortunately at hand in abundance as extemporaneous life preservers. For himself and Hal, both men of courage and action, their resolution was to stand by the vessel so long as two boards held together ; and then to commit themselves to God's mercy and the Swinge on some such fragile raft. Many of the mariners in hopes to get ashore (not a mile off) before the increasing darkness made escape still more questionable, leapt off from time to time ; and were seen for a little while battling with the torrent : but Hal's keen eye, noticing how fast the tide ebbed, counselled further patience : haply this very reef of danger might become their path of safety.

Soon uprose the moon shining placidly through swift and ragged clouds upon that scene of desolation : and with the sinking tide down went the stormy wind ; and the moonlight now shone brightly upon a broken prow stuck high upon the craggy reef, a flapping foresail,

several mariners floating on the smoother swell, and sundry figures picking their difficult way along the reef's teeth to shore : among them our honest Hal, and Stephan the Great Primate.

How the rude inhabitants received them hospitably at La Ville, and how thankful our travellers were at their escape, I need hardly stop to tell you. But it is as well to say this : viz., that had it not been for this shipwreck, Stephan must have fallen into John's murderous hands : for, disappointed of his prey at Winchester, and hearing through De Carteret of the Primate's sojourn in Guernesey, he sent over to seize him. Nothing but the account of his shipwreck somewhere in the Channel, with the loss of all on board, prevented further search, and made John happy in his assured destruction.

Meanwhile, Stephan with his friendly Hal, had escaped to Cherbourg, thence to Paris, and thereafter to Soissons ; where, at a great assem-

bly convened by Philip of France, he met his friends, the Bishops of Ely and London. Here they held counsel about the wicked King, resolving to dethrone him, and place the crown on the head of some more worthy sovereign.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Pandulph and his Homager.

TIME flies, and we must evermore fly with it : we have come in this drama to Woden's-day, the 15th of May, 1213, the Eve of Ascension : the scene is Dover Castle, then the chief stronghold of John, under his almost only faithful servant, Hubert de Burg ; and the chief actors are our worst English King, the forsaken of God and man, and his now sole hope towards either, Pandulph the Pope's nuncio.

A vast gathering of burgesses, serfs, and villeins crowded all about that castle hill ; indignant at the coming shame, and venting their

sense thereof in loud cries of rage against the craven monarch. Within the walls a large number of the baronial retainers and their following throng every courtyard : and the great hall itself is filled with the Lords and chief Estates of England in sullen expectation. They are all seated ; and in the middle stands one empty gilded throne under a red silk canopy, and an embroidered footstool near it.

Anon, through the open portal at the end of the hall comes solemnly a short procession : but no one of England's magnates stirs from his seat nor rises in its honour ; though Church and King in their worst-seen phases both are there.

First, some bowing ushers in the gay liveries of the Di Masca family ; next the Nuncio Pandulph, Cardinal of the Twelve Apostles, a proud and portly figure robed in crimson, and wearing the broad red hat and tassels : on either side and a little in arrear so as to give

him the step, two knights templars stride along in full armour, with their vizors down, and swords drawn : following them, more servants in the Di Masca livery : then a royal herald, and two trumpeters of the Brabant guard : and last, in a sordid robe, without one trace of ornament or honour, John of England, humbly carrying the crown on a black cushion before him. When he came in, pale, trembling, and with dishevelled hair, there was an uneasy clatter of spurs upon the pavement, and a thrill of disgust ran electrically through the hall.

But the haughty priest is seated on that central throne, with his two armed supporters right and left, his livery men about him, John kneeling on the footstool, and the herald with his trumpeters behind.

At a signal from the Nuncio, the herald, without an obeisance, handed a document to the abject King, who, in order to receive it, put down the cushion and the crown for a moment

at Pandulph's feet: the proud Roman kicked it over by a seeming careless accident,—and many a sword started half-way from its scabbard then and there: but Pandulph took no heed of the disturbance; he left the crown upon the ground and signed to the kneeling King to read.

John tried; but could not get beyond a husky half audible, "We John—" his voice refused the next words "by the grace of God, King of England:" so, with a contemptuous glance at the despicable object, Pandulph signed to the herald to take the writing from him and to read it aloud.

Now, in its dull integrity as given by the chroniclers that writing is too technical and lengthy for my purpose: but only imagine how the Barons must have writhed and groaned in spirit, to hear that herald mouth such sentences as these: they only endured it for a little season.

“ We abase ourselves, and with our kingdom have willingly humiliated us ; therefore not by force nor compulsion but of our own free will confirmed in the common council of our Barons” (a lie) “ we have freely given to God and his holy apostles Peter and Paul and our mother the Holy Church of Rome and our Lord Pope Innocent with his catholic successors the whole kingdom of England, and the whole kingdom of Ireland !” &c., &c. : all to be held of the Pope secondarily at a tribute of a thousand marks a year—and this fiefship to be “irrevocable by any of our successors on pain of forfeiture of his crown.”

The craven King ! the wicked foolish coward ! How utterly despised and hated of his people then was he ; the salesman of England’s independence to buy Rome’s protection. But our Honour sprang from the reaction of this shame, our English Liberties were begotten from this very scene of Italian tyranny.

John feebly picked up the crown, and like a servitor mechanically held it out to Pandulph. The Cardinal took it, looked at the jewels, and kept the abject monarch waiting awhile : there was a dangerous rustle in the hall : Englishmen are long-suffering to a fault, but the Pope must not be master of our crown even for a minute. The Barons looked at one another, and Magna Charta was conceived in that look.

Pandulph, having sufficiently shown his power as Rome's arrogant representative, placed the crown on John's head and bade him rise. Immediately, the trumpeters sounded a royal salute ; and of course the intention was, that the assembly should stand and shout in John's honour ; but all remained sullenly seated and in dead silence.

John trembled with rage and shame ; but Pandulph seemed indifferent, for England was humbled in her wicked king.

And now another ceremony has to be per-

formed ; this, this alone was the key-note to the Barons' patience : they had waited thus long, and had endured all, to see (according to programme) their acknowledged patriotic leader, Stephan Langton, accepted by the King as Primate. That Stephan could not have brooked the arrogance of Pandulph, had he been present, I for one am well assured : and it is a consolation to find the chroniclers reporting that he being absent personally was against the King's surrender of the crown to Rome ; he desired John's humiliation, but not England's.

John stood, and the Nuncio sate, as did the Barons—when the herald left that hall to summon from an ante-chamber “the Primate Cardinal Langton, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.”

In full canonicals, robed, mitred, croziered, preceded by a cross-bearer and acolytes, but with a modest self-possession, entered Stephan Langton : and the whole assembly immediately

with a thundering shout rose as one man. He advanced towards the King, holding out the hand of reconciliation. John, abased at his recent degradation (and all this like most other matters in our story is historical) fell at his feet in tears : and as Stephan bent down and raised him, he whispered, " Old Tangley !"

Astonished, the King looked into his Primate's face with a keen and searching glance : was this Langton then, whom he had so deeply hated as the monk of St. Martha's, this Langton whom he had so much feared as the near ally of Innocent and Philip, this Langton who headed up the Baronial confederation, this lofty Prelate in his vesture of lace and gold, none other than the bold young forester, whose daring exploit in the rescue of his bride he so well remembered ? None other, none other truly : and conscience in that moment made the bad King once again fall at his feet like an abject.

The hall rang with acclamations ; for the Barons felt it as a special triumph that their avowed leader thus was doubly honoured ; and Pandulph was glad of the exaltation of the Church, ay and of the Pope's Primate : but in Stephan Langton's mind there was another thought, deep-rooted in sad memories and hot affections : in this fallen King his Alice is avenged : yet there remains a higher mission ; Langton is to save his country.

CHAPTER XXIX.

An Interview long looked for.

STRAIGHT from Dover Stephan turned not to the right hand nor to the left till he had passed along the Pilgrim's Way. Dean Milman strangely corroborates the truth of our Surrey love-story: for whereas we are assured by Tyrrell and others that John first met Pandulph and the Primate at Dover, Milman says that Langton went straight to Winchester, there to see the King: the fact being, that so far as the King's presence was concerned, the fallen monarch was doomed to repeat his abject

homage to Rome in that cathedral, where Nicholas Bishop of Tusculum gave him absolution from the Pope ; and so far as respected the Primate's immediate journey thitherward who can wonder at it when informed that the vale of St. Martha's and nunnery of St Catherine's lie in the route direct ?

Stephan's progress was a triumph : for strangely enough the Pope's choice was with papal astuteness the man of the people, a personal foe to the King, and acknowledged leader of the patriotic nobles : none could have chosen better for England than the Pontiff ; and (as we shall see anon) none could have selected worse for the interests of Rome : for the great hinderer henceforward to Ultramontane pretensions is this same Stephan Langton, by whose sterling Anglo-Saxonism the designs of Innocent were doomed to grievous disappointment.

Just passing through Canterbury, (in a tumult of joy banners and bell-ringing,) so as to

strike the route to Winton, Stephan and his train go on through the well-remembered lanes and forest tracks and hill paths. That an escort of Robin's merry-men should help them on the way is nothing wonderful ; for Hal kept frequent counsel with Will Fern, and Friar Tuck himself might wish for Langton's blessing. And so, for many days they travelled on through Kent and East Surrey, till having passed and visited Reygate cavern, Betchworth Castle and Dorking, our hero comes to revisit home scenes ; at Reygate being joined by Simon and his hearth wife, the now matronly Angélique.

It must have been a dreary day when Stephan saw in Friga-Street valley the blackened ruins of his mother's grange, and the mound above his father in the arbour : and all along the vale, as we know, was the same dark scene of desolation and misery. Everywhere with princely bounty our native-born Primate relieved the

wretched inhabitants still left of what erst was called The Happy Valley ; everywhere from Wodetone to Gomersal and Shire and Aldeburie was he followed by the blessings of the multitudes rejoicing in his prodigal largesse ; everywhere with a bursting heart he moved among those desolate old scenes, saluted by the gratitude of hundreds.

But the climax of his personal feelings is not yet come. Robin's scouts, his heralds all along the route, have some time since conveyed a letter to Alice, announcing the great event of his approach : O loved, O long-desired, and much-dreaded coming !

And the Primate has arranged to celebrate high Mass on a set day at St. Martha's, specially inviting thither the few remaining monks hovering round Newark (the priory itself having been long since sacked and burnt) and the Abbess and sisters of St. Catherine's nunnery : the chapel was too small to hold many beside,

even if any able-bodied folk remained capable of climbing that hill. John's mercenaries had left for population thereabouts few that were not maimed or halt or blind ; and it is a sharp pull up to St. Martha's.

The set day came : the Abbess (poor trembling heart !) and a deputation of calm sisters came in religious procession over the heights still called Chantry Downs from the hymns and chants sung there, and were early in their places ; and the Newark brothers were there, with a few more : all waited for the Primate, whose train was slowly winding up the steep East side.

And when in full pontificals Stephan entered by the great Western arch, and the solemn Sanctus as he advanced went up from the deep bass of the monks and the treble of the nuns, and he stood now after an interval of twenty-seven years by that well-remembered shrine, and knew that the trembling veiled figure next to him beside the rail was Alice,—who knows how

nearly the strong man had swooned away like a girl? but fortunately a Gothic stone sedile served for the Primate's throne, and he hardly wrestled down his weakness by a prayer.

In that High Mass was offered up to Heaven not alone those consecrated elements which typify the God who dwells in man, but in chief two flaming hearts full of immortal love for that Blessed One and for each other: together they ate of one bread, together drank of one cup; in spirit ever one, even in body they now were not divided: if in any case marriage is eternal, those twin souls will for ever be united.

And when, now for the first time after so many years and prayers and yearnings, they at the holy altar saw each other so long-desired eye to eye, how beatified in love, how beauteous in expression, how full of human rapture intensified yet calmed by heavenly grace were those two faces! With what an ecstasy of earnestness did he bless her, and in how sweet a

transport of deep joy did she from those loved lips receive his blessing. It was an antepast of heaven, that communion of true souls, a golden minute antedated from the glorious Age of Happiness-to-come.

Just before the Benediction, an anthem was thrillingly sung: it was "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And the Abbess, evidently overcome by her feelings, had knelt while others stood, close beside the Primate at the rail, and she sobbed audibly. Of course, he could notice such fervour of devotion only by infusing a deeper intensity into the final blessing he pronounced over her head: as he left her there worshipping, after the *Missa est*.

The service is over, and save the Primate all descend the hill in company; obsequious monks and gossiping sisters elated at such unusual gaiety and the beautiful view; and so they walk down the glen to the blackened ruins of old

Tything ; where attending serfs have littered down the mules and palfreys, and are now getting them rubbed up again for the departure.

Alice however is not there : the holy Abbess whose devotion at that shrine is so well known, and who frequently has spent hours there in solitary devotion, alone has lingered in the chapel ; and is kneeling still at the communion rail.

Stephan, with Hal in a fitting garb officiating as acolyte, is in the little vestry disrobing, and getting into traveller's trim again ; telling his faithful friend too in the highest spirits that he will overtake Alice on the way ere she is aware and go on with her to St. Catherine's, and tell her eye to eye to their very heart's mutual rejoicing more than all the loving things he ever had written to her by letter : the evening of their days might yet be gladdened by seeing one another frequently and intimately : their

middle age should yet be happy in the sunshine of interchanged affections.

When the Primate with his attendant came out of the vestry, they saw at a glance that the Abbess was still at her prayers: and with a throbbing heart Stephan gently went up to her and knelt beside her. She must be strangely absorbed indeed not to notice this, he thought: but with infinite delicacy, he waited yet a little, and prayed a calming prayer.

A terrible suspicion crossed Hal's mind: he quietly crept forward and touched the kneeling figure: no sign, no motion, no reply. Hal then touched his master's hands, clasped over his face in prayer. Stephan looked up quickly and happily thinking it was Alice who had touched him.

"Ah, my master! my poor dear master!"

"Hal, why that cry, why these bitter tears? What—what,—Alice! Alice! wake,—wake! It is I, Stevie!—O God, she is dead!"

He fell almost as senseless as that inanimate kneeling figure.

Yes! it were better for her to have died thus with a heart broken by its own ecstatic joy, than to have still lived on her melancholy life, divorced from him she loved. Yes! it were wiser for him that even his own Alice should mount to bliss a martyr, a Virgin-confessor beside God's altar, than fill his consecrated heart with thoughts of hopeless love. The sainted Abbess and the holy Primate had best have thus met and parted on St. Martha's.

When Stephan came to himself, he was not long before he thus discerned how merciful and wise was even this stern Providence: and dear old Hal comforted him: and some of the sisters running back to see for the Abbess (whose litter has been waiting a quarter-glass) ascertain what has happened, and give the alarm.

It was all in vain: restoratives were utterly useless; the glazed blue eyes wide open, the

fallen mouth, the white waxen face, the lissom-jointed form heavily lying still in any change of posture, the clammy chilliness, and those pale lips proclaim that the spirit of Alice has departed.

I draw a veil over that sacred theme, Stephan Langton's sorrow ; the more so, because it was so secret : none but Hal there knew how dear to the great Primate's inmost heart was the Lady Abbess of St. Catherine's ; none but Hal could tell that the bitter tears he dropped upon her grave when within a day or two they buried her in the chancel of St. Martha's (himself officiating) were more than those of a feeling man when haply he has lost some friend.

Stephan had sent orders instantly to a mason of Gilford to hew him out two stone coffins, and to place them one on each side of the chancel of St. Martha's, just under the surface, the lids to be flush with the floor : they were

both ready and in place on the day of burial: in one of them the weeping nuns deposited their Abbess; the other at present remained empty.

CHAPTER XXX.

A Gallop to Runne-mead.

BUT much of the great work which Langton came into the world to do is still remaining to be done: the Liberties of England are yet to be achieved. Langton remembered not only that he was an Archbishop, but an Englishman, and a noble of England. "He had asserted with the Pope the liberties of the Church against the King; he asserted the liberties of England against the same King though supported by the Pope." "Almost the first act of Langton

on his arrival in England was to take the initiative on the part of the Barons."

John, just returned from his complimentary visit to De Carteret at Jersey was furious against his contumacious nobles, and especially swore vengeance on the Primate. Civil war now raged horribly over the land; the King backed by his mercenaries with a few favourites and the Pope on one side, the confederated Barons of England headed by the Primate on the other.

At Northampton the Archbishop in person courageously expostulated with the tyrant of his people, but was dismissed with scorn: thence he followed him to Nottingham, threatening excommunication against all who levied war on the Barons of England till their just claims were heard: and thereafter immediately convened a great assembly of the Estates of the realm at London.

Here, on the 25th of August 1213 before all the civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries congregated

in old St. Pawles' Langton produced and read aloud the Charter of Liberties granted by King Henry the First, a hundred years ago. As its chief clauses were afterwards incorporated in the Great Charter, they need not yet be detailed : but it tells volumes for the utter destruction John's dozen years of misrule had occasioned to monasteries and libraries and literature in general, when we find that one only copy of King Henry's charter was then believed to be extant ; namely that from which Langton read, having found it in an old chest at Edmondsbury Priory. As he gave out clause after clause, the excitement was prodigious ; and at the close " with loud acclamations the Bishops and Barons there swore with one voice that they would contend to death itself for those liberties."

There is a famous historical picture by Arthur Devis, which as engraved and published by Bowyer has popularized this striking scene : and the picture is the more remarkable from

the fact that every personage depicted by the artist is a portrait of the then living descendants of the Englishmen who gained Magna Charta.

We must not however further encumber our story with the details which any one may read for himself in any of our chronicles. My errand is with Stephan Langton personally ; and not to be recording the various successes of John or the Barons, still less the ambitious schemes of France in a meditated invasion of our distracted country. But I may as well mention that the Barons chose our friend the " Lord Robert Fitz-Walter their general, calling him the Marechal of God and of the Holy Church," and that after London itself had pronounced for the Patriots, the " perjured King " was forced to a parley. It falls also within the province of our story to record that Stephan sent his brother Simon, as a legate to Rome, to expostulate with Pope Innocent against the madness of his protégé, King John ; and that the Pope

arrogantly upholding the King, and threatening to excommunicate Stephan if he revisited him, our hero quietly held on his way, and on Simon's return consecrated him a Prelate of England in spite both of John and the Pope. Further, we may mention shortly and without another word-painted scene there, that in Reygate Cavern the draft of Magna Charta was settled and approved by the confederates in council then assembled, Earl Warrenne being President. And now not to exhaust your patience, we may fairly hurry on to Runne-mead.

Not on account of the races there, however ancient; still less for the river running by, however immemorially; but because of old time that mead had been the place for the "Runes" (our savage forefathers' Mohicanlike discussions) is that famous spot so named: everybody knows it; a little flat of some 150 acres near Staines, with the Thames running through it and enclosing a small osiered eyot

now called Magna Charta's isle: like many of our other scenes, this also is in the county Surrey; to wit in its northern hundred of Chertsey.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Magna Charta.

WE are now come, rapidly as flying Time himself, to Friday, the 15th of June, 1215.

A vast encampment of pavilions blazing with heraldry and thronged by men-at-arms covers the green plain of Runne-mead: for the King, finding "that he had scarce seven knights left him at Odiham, and was quite forsaken of his people, and fearing lest the Barons should seize all his castles now ungarrisoned, yet having conceived in his heart an implacable hatred against them, he so far dissembled as to make

peace with them for a time: in hopes that when he should become stronger, he might be more severely revenged upon them separately, with whom whilst in a body he found he was not able to cope.”

A pleasant honourable foe, goodsooth, our patriots have to deal with: and one who, as we shall see, no sooner signed and sealed, than he repudiated his own autograph!

And now appears our good Archbishop, a mediator between King and people, with William, Earl of Pembroke, and scores of bishops and barons. And the royal pavilion is pitched upon that little island, and his Highness has come thither in his barge upon the Thames from Windsor: he came privately, the rowers being out of livery; and himself, with Pembroke and the Archbishop the only passengers; they landed quietly, and got into the tent almost unperceived of the multitude at Runne-mead.

However, assembled there to meet the King were twenty-five chosen barons, and Cardinal Pandulph with some others: and directly his Highness had landed, up went the Royal Standard over the pavilion amid thundering shouts from the vast encampment, a mixture of exultation and execration.

Within the tent on a small table with a stool at side, lay a fair sheet of parchment fully engrossed, a pen and an ink-horn. The King seated himself, all others standing, and Archbishop Langton took up the document, intending to read it aloud; he bowed to John, and began, "*Johannes, Dei gratiâ Rex—*"

"Nay, Sir Priest; we are come to sign away everything; but it irketh us to hear your lawyer's latin: cease, I say."

"Your Highness will surely read the Articles then."

"No, Priest, no: we are here to sign them."

The wily John was even then getting up the

pleas of compulsion and surprize, whereby, through Pandulph's present help, he afterwards persuaded Pope Innocent to annul this covenant.

"But your Highness is aware—" interposed Pembroke.

"Baron, I know that thou and all these with thee claim my very kingdom, and would make me—yea, make *us*, a slave."

(John was the first English King who used the plural pronoun : and it was then, as in the parallel case of Majesty long afterwards in 1519, accounted a species of blasphemy, being taken to imitate the attributes of the Sacrosanct Trinity.)

Then Langton spoke,—

"These be in chief the liberties granted by your Highness's great Predecessor Henry Beauclerc, grounded on the earliest grants of Edward the Confessor, and since confirmed by

Stephen of Blois, and your Highness's royal father of most blessed memory."

"Curse—" even John stopped there: but he hated that good and weak father: "give me the deed, I say: Gad's teeth, I came to sign it."

Stephan, with a calm glance round upon the twenty-five witnesses who signified assent, set the document forthwith before the King, who seized the pen and hastily scratched on it his monogram. The first witness who signed after King John was Stephan Langton; and after the signatures and seals of all the others, the great seal of England was appended in brown wax.

And what was Magna Charta? Why do Englishmen claim it as the very root of their spreading tree of liberty? Wherefore would those barons willingly have died the death to compass this great end, which thus their bad

King granted with so much levity, and such utter lack of grace? What was the Charter to them,—what is it to us?

Nothing could be drier, nor easier, than to copy it off for your edification, with a running comment; but as the chroniclers have made that famous parchment accessible to everybody who chooses to search for a copy of it, (by a strange providence the original even after seven centuries being still visible at the British Museum) the biographer of Stephan Langton need only touch in a general and popular way upon the reasons which actuated *him* in wishing to obtain it.

Before Magna Charta then, the crown was absolute over **its** immediate vassals—and these similarly over their own slave-servants: not only with regard to such public matters as levying of arbitrary aids, taxes, and scutages; but even as to seizing any man's personal property, especially on death; farming out the

heritage of minors, to the best bidder ; appropriating horses, carts, even ploughs and mattocks to the lord's use, and so starving the serf : selling rich widows in marriage ; making law and justice open matters of purchase ; degrading the judges to be abjectly dependent on the King's caprice, and following his person ; consecrating bishops and appointing all other church officers at his mere will without election of clerics or of laymen ; changing by the like caprice the ancient privileges of counties cities and boroughs : hindering by heavy exactions the freedom of trade and commerce ; and making every Englishman who might wish to travel for pleasure or otherwise pay enormously for leave to go away. Then, the forest laws were terribly bloody ; the King's deer and other game, even feathered fowl as we have seen, were not only to be at free quarters in any man's cornfield, but woe betide him if he drove them away ; and as to killing them, in John's

time a poor serf's family would have been cruelly exterminated for such a crime.

Now, all these tyrannies are cured by Magna Charta: we may amass and hold property in peace; may marry or not at pleasure; can make our wills at death, with fair assurance of their execution; have a free church; just impartial independent judges; absolute liberty of coming and going; untrammelled trade and commerce; and no tax of any kind without our own free choice thereto actual or virtual. Justice is now neither sold, denied, nor delayed. No man is amerced except by judgment of his peers. The rigours of all feudal rights are entirely abated. Every man is amenable to the laws, and to them only. No human being can tyrannize with impunity on any one however humble in enfranchised England. In a word, the Great Charter made Englishmen free; and they were but slaves before it.

Hear also the strong testimony of Hallam

(Middle Ages, vol. II. p. 447.) on the theme of Magna Charta. "It is still the key-stone of English liberty. All that has since been obtained is little more than as confirmation or commentary : and if every subsequent law were to be swept away, there would still remain the bold features that distinguish a free from a despotic monarchy. It has been lately the fashion to depreciate the value of Magna Charta as if it had sprung from the private ambition of a few selfish barons and redressed only some feudal abuses. It is indeed of little importance by what motives those who obtained it were guided. The real characters of men most distinguished in the transactions of that time are not easily determined at present. Yet if we bring these ungrateful suspicions to the test, they prove destitute of all reasonable foundation. An equal distribution of civil rights to all classes of freemen forms the peculiar beauty of the charter. In this just solicitude for the

people, and in the moderation which infringed upon no essential prerogative of the monarchy, we may perceive a liberality and patriotism very unlike the selfishness which is sometimes rashly imputed to those ancient barons. And, as far as we are guided by historical testimony, two great men, the pillars of our church and state, may be considered as entitled beyond the rest to the glory of this monument; Stephan Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and William Earl of Pembroke. To their temperate zeal for a legal government, England was indebted during that critical period for the two greatest blessings that patriotic statesmen could confer; the establishment of civil liberty upon an immoveable basis, and the preservation of national independence under the ancient line of sovereigns, which rasher men were about to exchange for the dominion of France."

Enough: we cannot stoop to the dullness of inditing an essay on Magna Charta. Let those

who love blackletter and the unreadable homilies of chroniclers and lawyers search out the matter wearily for themselves, and blame my brevity as tediously as they will.

The great exploit of Stephan Langton's life was now in theory accomplished: but in practice there arose at once a terrible struggle to make that exploit anything but an idle bravado of a few score barons against one King.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Lewis the Dauphin.

JOHN, mad with vexation, “curssed his mother that bare him, ye houre that he was borne, and ye paps that gave him sucke: he whetted his teeth, and did bite now on one staffe and now on another, and often brake the same in pieces when he had doone, &c., &c. ;” according to old Hollingshed : he ran away and hid himself in the isle of Wight, often drest as a common fisherman ; he raised a still more barbarous army of mercenaries against his unhappy subjects, “letting them loose to spread devastation all over the land ;” and got the Pope to absolve him from his written grant.

Innocent excommunicated all the barons in a lump, but they only laughed at him ; and he suspended Stephan Langton in particular from his Archbishopric.

A less conscientious mind than Langton's would have equally disregarded this : but the Pope was still (according to Church views in those times) his spiritual superior ; and Langton would not disobey. So he hastened to Rome to lay all the shocking facts of England's misery under her mad King before the Pontiff, in whose character from much personal knowledge our hero seems to have had good confidence. Had he remained in England, the barons would have been surely dissuaded by his patriotic good sense to have abstained from their next false move.

Let us hear them however, in their evil case, in mitigation of conduct which England has never forgiven. John, with his overwhelming and desperately cruel bands of brigands over-

ran the whole realm, desolating it by fire and sword: wherever he lodged at night, it is reported of the wretch that "with his own hand he took delight in setting fire to that house in the morning:" its native inhabitants having first been most cruelly tormented and killed.

The King was mad,—worse, was horribly wicked: and what between the Pope's still potent authority in his behalf, and those ferocious Brabanters Poitevins and Flamands who thronged to his standard for plunder and crime, was still so strong as to be well nigh master of all England; ay, and of Scotland too; whose King Alexander pitying the wretched case of his neighbour nation had resolved to aid the patriot cause, and was well nigh extinguished himself for his philanthropy: for John's brigands laid all waste as far as Edinburgh.

Our English Barons then, in sore strait, resolved as a last sad resource to invite Lewis the Dauphin, son of Philip Augustus, to come over and be King of England. They had this poor

excuse for such a proposition ; namely, that Lewis's wife, Blanche of Castile, was John's niece : but as John had children of his own, and there were several others in succession long before the line reached Blanche, any such reason if alleged was futile. The plain fact was they wanted a potent ally ; and Philip was nearest and strongest and readiest to help. The death of Pope Innocent happening simultaneously, Philip was free from the dread of being excommunicated for invading a realm under the protection of Rome. So then Lewis, glad enough of such an invitation, quickly collected an army, landed, and actually penetrated as far as London, where he received the homage of Englishmen.

Among his chief adherents, I regret to say, is found "Simon de Langton" (the absent Primate's brother) who undoubtedly would never have been so un-English had Stephan been at hand to counsel him, and if he himself had been less under the French influence of Angélique.

And this is the last we hear of Simon ; except that the canons of York elected him Archbishop, but the Pope failing to confirm their choice, and consecrating one Walter de Gray in his stead, Simon's latter end is veiled from us in the shadow of history ; and I doubt whether after all, his hearthwife Angélique did him any good.

But Lewis the invader had hurried past Dover, where Hubert de Burgh held the castle stoutly, and Lewis at first was in too great haste to stop and take it : now, however, after his London ovation, he returned, sat down before Dover, and made a solemn vow that he would not move till it was taken. That rash vow saved England : the barons repented, especially when they found he scrupled not to call them " Traytors ;" even John, fighting for England, once more became popular ; the whole nation rose as one man, and Lewis with his invading French were ignominiously driven across the Channel.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

John's End.

STEPHAN was all this while at Rome: he had pacified and convinced Innocent; but just as all was coming right again for England, and Stephan's own suspension was withdrawn, the Pope suddenly fell ill at Perugia while engaged in rousing the Pisans and Genoese to join the new crusade, and died at the age of fifty-five. So Stephan returned to England as Archbishop.

Meanwhile, however, a great event had taken place: which set all the church-bells a-ringing,

all the village greens a-dancing, and made broad England more beside itself with joy than even that expulsion of the French invaders.

Let me be didactically calm in telling you why: though the first acts in the drama were rather cause for sorrow.

The King, having miserably wasted Suffolk and Norfolk, and utterly destroyed the abbeys of Peterborough and Croyland, essayed to go across the Wash towards Spalding in Lincolnshire. He carried with him all his treasure "with the sacred relicts, his moveable chapel, and his portable regalia:" it seems this cruel despot of ours could also be characteristically a superstitious bigot. The King and his immediate attendants being on horseback passed safely at ebb-tide over the sands and the river Welstream: but the heavier-laden carriages following with all their precious freight "the earth opened in the midst of the floods, and they

sunk down into the gulf, both men, horses and carriages.”

That night, John in great anguish of mind at the loss of his jewellery and the means of paying his Brabanters (terribly did he fear and bribe them) got safe to Swinstead Abbey and there lodged : his grief and fear were excessive : and (as his wont was) to solace himself and drive away care he commanded the company of the Abbot’s “niece;” whereat the scared Cistercian was much afflicted.

One Symon however a monk, and an admirer of the damsel himself, volunteered to his superior that he should “poyson” the tyrant, if the Abbot would absolve him previously ; an arrangement seemingly of no sort of difficulty : and the matter was further excused on patriotic principles to the Cistercian consciences, from the fact that the bad King had been heard to threaten that “he would burn so many corn ricks as to make the

penny loaf throughout England worth a shilling.” Furthermore, the Lincolnshire Judith professed entire willingness to stab our English Holophernes on her own account, if need were ; but probably this would be superfluous : the royal traveller’s first care was sure to be the larder ; his gluttony was notorious, especially for fruit ; and nothing would be easier than to dose his dessert.

Monk Symon was perhaps cook to the establishment, for he produced immediately a dish of stewed pears : a pleasant commixture of henbane, nightshade and “ y^e poyson of a toade,” evidently kept ready for use in that immaculate abbey, having doctored all the pears except three ; which, marked by cloves in a different way from the rest, the prudent monk saved harmless : and well for him and the damsel that he did so.

Impatiently the tyrant had been kept waiting, and no doubt blaspheming also to the full ; when at last in trips Judith, followed by Symon with his pears.

"At last, ey, Sirrah? well, my fair, and why so tardy? Hither, thou shalt eat out of the King's dish; nay, and thou too, Sirrah,—ha! —taste, I say, before us."

The monk with manifest gusto ate a wholesome pear, and handed another to the damsel.

"Tis well, fellow: now depart, and bring us a flagon of wine: ha! by St. Apicius, but the fruit is luscious."

"Isn't the flagon long a coming? let me speed it for your Highness," quoth Judith.

"Nay now, pretty minx, thou shalt not be tripping away from us: come nearer, take this last pear."

She knew it to be a poisoned one, and with adroit awkwardness dropped it on the sandy floor, so evidently from a rustic fear of royalty that his Highness was pleased to laugh at her right ghastlily,—for in the midst of it a spasm seized him.

"Ha! where is that wine? call for it, quick!"

Symon, waiting outside, came in demurely : he had not drugged this posset, because he well knew he would be told to drink first.

“ That wine, Sirrah ! there is colic in the fruit, ha ! ” Another terrible convulsion seemed to struggle with him like grim death : the King ought to have suspected something, but he had been yesterday so fevered and anguished at his losses, and your pears are cold eating, and that country wench and this simple monk had indubitably eaten too, and, “ Ha ! the wine, I say, but drink first, Sirrah ! ”

The monk obeyed heartily : and gave the beaker to his Highness, who drained it to the foot ; rich good hot wine too, ha !

Now nothing makes your toad-drop work its deadly will like wine : Symon had calculated this ; and waited, watching stealthily like a cat.

“ Hither, minx !—ha—again, again ! ”

He writhed and rolled upon the couch in

agony, was hurled upon the floor by some invisible wrestler, and every feature of his face and muscle of his frame was twisted into hideous contortions.

Withal, his mind was clear: and he feared that he was dying: however, could he suspect anything? both of those clowns had eaten and drank first.

“Let some one—call our litter,—onward—to Newark.”

Gladly the monk obeyed: and Judith hid her knife and hurried to hail the bearers. The arrow had shot home, that toad was feeding on his vitals.

Instantly the royal train was in attendance: and they lifted into the litter the wretched John, groaning in a mortal agony: for hours and hours, gnawed and excruciated by the subtle poison, he rolled upon his bed of pain: conscience too was terribly at work, for in the midst of all those torments his mind clearly

called up a black phantasmagoria of lifelong crimes and cruelties, thronging round his soul like evil spirits. Without a friend or helper in heaven or earth, surrounded only by those bloody Brabanters (who even now spurned the dying lion) amid shocking agonies and horrid imprecations (just as his litter entered the court-yard of Newark Abbey) perished the tyrant John.

How strange a Nemesis that he must die at Newark, another Newark indeed from our's in Surrey,—but still retributively connected with the wrongs of him who as a brother of Newark Priory had a profligate King for his persecutor, and an oppressed country for his grateful client.

As to almost no event in that evil King's career are the chroniclers agreed except about the universal joy wherewith all men received the news of his death. Whether or not he was “poysoned” as universally believed, or died of a flux occasioned by “a surfeit of

peaches and bracket or new ale,"—any how the pest was dead, and the nation emancipated from a monster rejoiced frantically at an unlooked-for deliverance; the caitiff Symon was beloved of all men, and that buxom Swinstead Judith held as honourable as the noble daughter of Merari.

In truth, England had good cause for joy: through the long course of nearly eighteen years of actual and ten more of virtual reign John as King or prince-protector had ravaged and destroyed his people with deliberate and excessive oppression. Beginning as Lackland, he lived up to the credit of his name by losing everything a King can lose; and in the French form of it "Sansterre" seems to have been redivivus in one of the bloodiest leaders of the Revolution in 1793. Cruel as Nero, prodigal as Caligula, insatiate in grovelling appetites as Tiberius and Vitellius, our model wicked-king combined in his single person all the vices that ever wore a crown.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

All Achieved.

THE accession of the boy-King Henry the Third at ten years old was a blessed event for England: for the virtuous Pembroke was Protector of the realm, Archbishop Langton being its ruling genius.

“We bring our years to an end as it were a tale that is told:” and ever towards the last our sands run out more rapidly. In a few sentences, now that the great errands of his life have been fulfilled, now that his love is glorified and his country free, we may crowd

the events that remain to illustrate our hero's good career.

Perhaps no reigns are more variously reported by the chroniclers than those of John and our third Henry; probably because the land was in such a state of anarchy from misrule and civil contest as to make the knowledge of historic facts almost inaccessible to enquirers. Even as to dates, our records differ; and if any reader, fresh from one historiographer, thinks fit to arraign any of our facts or figures, it may be as well for him to remember that there are a dozen other chroniclers and none alike. John's reign is a capital theme for the romantic historian,—and Stephan's life equally a first-rate subject for imaginative biography. Nevertheless, be it fairly understood, that we have invented next to nothing but details.

For yet twelve years the greatest Prelate that ever sate enthroned at Canterbury Cathedral

ruled the Church and blest the realm with piety and vigour. He had annotated chapter by chapter the whole Bible, and was the earliest of that noble band in good doing, the Scripture-reader and home missionary: in especial his commentaries on the Psalms, and his religious tractates on St. Paul's epistles were circulated by hundreds of scribes all over the land. He wrote also a panegyrical life of Thomas à Becket, and is our chief cotemporary historian of the difficult reign of Richard Cœur de Lion. In addition, we read that in his early day he was considered no indifferent poet: and there is said to be extant a sort of religious epic from his hand in the Anglo-Norman dialect on the Passion of our Lord Christ.

For other matters; on the 17th of May 1220, Archbishop Langton crowned the young King Henry at Westminster with the plain gold circlet of St. Edward the Confessor: John having characteristically lost in a quicksand (as

we have heard) the principal crown jewels : and, we are picturesquely told that, by way of making the plain circlet on that coronation day appear less humble (as it would have done by contrast with the heraldic coronets of earls and barons) Stephan ordained that all the peers should instead of their coronets wear white fillets : whereby the King, in spite of the plainness of his diadem, remained in a due prominence.

Furthermore, the Archbishop publicly invested him with a consecrated rosary from Palestine, from which depended in a crystal frame a morsel of the True Cross. Soon after the ceremony, Stephan induced Henry to confirm the Great Charter publicly : and when Fawkes de Breauté and some others of the bad John's-men would have persuaded the King otherwise, the Archbishop boldly said, "Nay then, sirs, by your counsels he will lose his royal crown : " on which, at Pembroke's

suggestion, the King signed and sealed immediately.

Early in the year 1222, the active and enlightened Archbishop held a great synod of all the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the realm at Oxford, "for the Reformation of the English Church" both in points of Scriptural doctrine and moral practice: and, with especial reference to the latter, in 1225 issued a decree against the corruptions of the clergy; especially of the monastic houses, which a long period of neglect as to episcopal supervision had lowered into utter degradation. In fact, he anticipated Luther and Melancthon.

For another matter, it will interest the believers in this tale to know that, with extraordinary honour, Archbishop Langton translated the body of Thomas à Becket "out of its stone coffin in a vault at Canterbury, into a rich shrine all of gold and beset with precious stones." Surely, in that splendid ceremonial,

when all the conduits in Canterbury ran wine, and even the King himself with all his court attended to honour the translation, Stephan remembered a certain shrine on St. Martha's hill, and a certain gentle martyr there laid beside the altar.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A good Man's Death.

AND now we are drawing to the end of this great theme of usefulness, patriotism, and love both human and divine : and there is no occasion to make a melodramatic scene of it. A good man's death is often quiet as a sleep, unnoticed as an ordinary sunset : his life has been throughout a chequered scene of clouds and sunshine, and he fears not to walk obscurely down a short dark valley to the portal that hides from his expectant eyes the Everlasting Glory, his Rest and his Reward.

From the public ministrations at Westminster and Canterbury, Stephan often retired awhile to a country-seat he had chosen at Slinfold, near the hundred of Wodetone, and not far removed from the scenes of his youth. He would gladly have found a dwelling in the midst of them, but John's rage against the Langton and Braiose families had (as we know) made a literal desert of that rich valley : so the nearest suitable mansion for a Primate was Slinfold Manor. His dear old Hal was always with him, a happy mixture of the valet and the friend, his personal confidant and attendant.

One fine summer's evening at Slinfold, looking out at the sun's last rays over the north-western heights of Hascomb, Stephan said abruptly to Hal, laying both hands with an expression of pain on the region of his heart,

“Dear friend, be not afraid nor grieved, if

it pleaseth God some day to take me suddenly: I often feel Death's finger tapping here."

"Well, dear Master, I am myself some seventy-four, and hale still though thine elder by twelve years; and by His good mercy too am ready to depart, if God will: only it were sadness to leave thee here alone. None other ever spoke to thee about Lady Alice, and I wot my speech doth comfort thee betimes."

"Hal,—I will now say a word while I have breath, for thy faithful zeal to see obeyed. When I die, (and, dearest friend, I know it will be soon, for this heart-spasm clutches me sorely) see thou that my body is laid beside her's in that empty grave."

They spoke not much beside, for both were sad; and as it were forebodingly the premonitory shadows of Holmbury and Leith Hill gloomed from that setting sun over Slinfold Manor. However, in the evening the good Archbishop prayed fervently with his household as usual,

and retired to rest; Hal as his habit was helping to disrobe him. A cheerful "Good-night, Hal, God bless thee," sent his friendly servitor to his accustomed couch in an ante-chamber.

Next morning, Hal marvelled as he drest himself that he did not hear his good Master at orison: it was Stephan's habit to pray aloud at sunrise, "and the Lord hearkened and heard it:" but this morning all is silent.

Hal crept in. His Master was fast asleep with his left hand under his head. It were pity to disturb him. So Hal retired for an hour or so.

But now the sun is well up, and all are astir, and Hal thinks it time to look in again. Still asleep, and in the same quiet easy posture.

Strange that he should not have moved all this time. Hal drew near,—and thought he looked pale; nearer,—there was no breathing,—touched his cheek, and it was cold as stone!

Enough : he knew the truth ; and (however his bursting heart relieved itself by sobs) was neither terrified nor surprized : often had he seen death, and knew his look intimately : hope of life there here was none. The Archbishop had been dead for hours : probably within a minute of that cheerful “God bless thee,” he had suddenly been summoned away.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

And Burial.

BUT Hal has an important mission to perform, instantly, secretly : and he set about it like a shrewd man, zealous to execute his friend's last wishes. It was not easy, but he managed the matter well.

Robin Hood was (he knew) far away in Nottinghamshire, where his Marian now grown old lay sick of a fever : Friar Tuck has long been dead ; and Little John has not been seen in Surrey for years. But Will Fern with his lieutenancy-detachment of foresters was in the

neighbourhood of Lonesome Valley : and Hal straightway sent a swift messenger to bid Will and eight of his men come with all speed on horseback to Slinfold, with a two-horse litter ; and he bade him go round by way of Dorking, buy of the plumber there a leaden coffin, fill it with earth, solder it down, and bring it in the litter : likewise a crowbar, and a bag of cement, and two of his men to be habited as mortuary servitors.

Meanwhile, to gain time for Will's coming, he went down and told the household that his Master had been taken ill in the night, and would not rise that morning for the worship. Further, he sent word to the monks of Canterbury (a long three days' journey at the speediest) to say that the Primate was dead, and bidding them haste to Slinfold. Some hours after this, as it was getting dark, he let up one after another of the servants quietly to see their Master ; for after long

patience and vain attempts to wake him, Hal has found him dead in his bed.

By this time, Will Fern is arrived ; it is now night, and Hal has had the coffin placed in a lower room by the seeming mortuaries,—surrounded it with torches, and covered it over with the Archbishop's pall : the mitre and crozier atop, and a certain Blessed Relic that he always wore, in a crystal Pyx before the mitre. By next morning, the household perceived that the old servant of their good master had caused all due honours to be done to him in the lying in state ; and they agreed to take watch and ward by turns night and day beside the coffin till the monks should come.

However, that same night, Hal had got the body, wrapped in its bed-clothes, cleverly into the litter, and next morning sent it off by Fern's men to old Tything ; there to wait (although the house was ruinous) in the little upper chamber till Hal appeared with further

directions. He managed this in the course of the day: enjoining first continual watching by the coffin's side on the mourning household: and so took horse for Aldeburie.

He called there for two reasons: first, to look up one of the scattered priests of Newark living there; and next to drop a tear on his Emma's grave under the Yew, in the southwest corner of that Old Churchyard. This done, and with the monk in company, he duly arrived by eventide at Tything: finding Fern and his men awaiting him, with the poor dear body: and that crowbar and bag of plaster which his generalship had foreseen to be necessary.

The sun had set, when in simple but sad procession they bore the corpse of Stephan to its last earthly rest in the chancel of St. Martha's: with their crowbar they lifted the heavy stone lid of that empty sarcophagus to the right; the one on the left being already full, as Hal remembered well: and then the body was deposited

where its spirit wished, beside the grave of Alice. The Newark priest performed his office though he knew not over whom, by torchlight, while the foresters stood round; and honest Will Fern did his best to comfort the inconsolable and faithful Hal: seldom has funeral seen a truer mourner.

And now that ponderous lid is crowbarred to its place again, and fixed with the cement: and the torches are extinguished; and in the calm clear moonlight they return mournfully.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Repeated.

BUT little remains to be told.

When the monks of Canterbury with the Subprior at their head, arrived in all possible haste at Slinfold Manor, they found that all things had been done under the circumstances decently and in order. The watchers still stood at head and foot of the coffin, torches were continually renewed, and what was very satisfactory (especially when that relic in the Pyx was considered) several miracles of healing had been already performed by the good archbishop in his lead, on divers sick folk who had crowded in to touch it for that purpose: nothing could

have been a better evidence of their late Primate's worth than such unquestioned cures. Already, they mooted among themselves the great idea of the archbishop's canonization.

And now, in mournful cavalcade through several towns and villages, amid open demonstrations of national sorrow at so sad a loss and all the church-bells tolling, they carry that sacred coffin to Canterbury: and with a gorgeous ceremonial consign it to the plain stone sepulchre in the Warrior's Chapel, where through a long succession of similar true believers, the verger will even now assure you reposes the body of Stephan Langton.

THE END.

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